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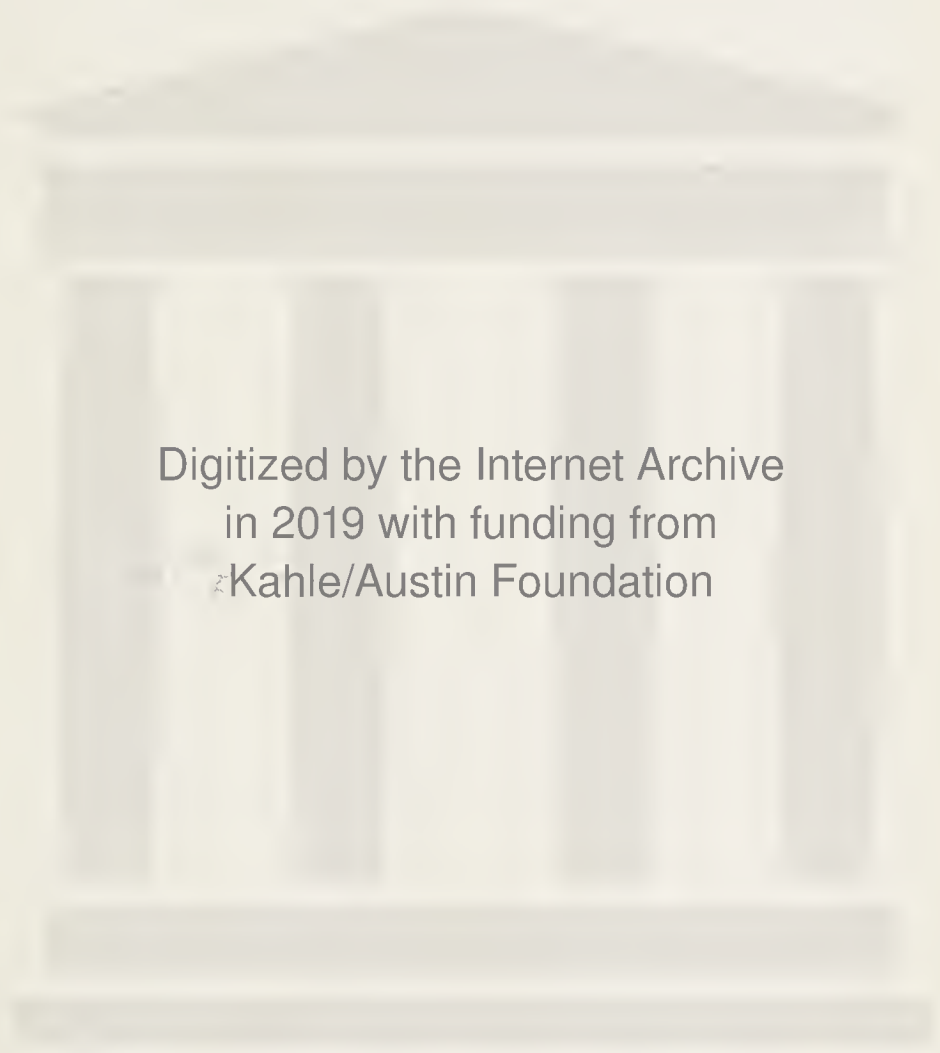
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THE ANNALS OF COVENT GARDEN  
AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD





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*After Hogarth*

“MORNING”

The plate being reversed Lord Archer's house is shewn on the wrong side of the church.



# THE ANNALS OF COVENT GARDEN

AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

by

E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

M.A., F.S.A.

“Covent Garden is the Heart of the Town.”—STEELE.

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

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## EXPLANATORY NOTE

**W**HEN one is dealing with a particular area of London, as I do in this book, nothing is more difficult than to know where to draw a line of demarcation which shall take in such a centre and its tributary streets and by-ways, but which shall not impinge too far beyond those boundaries on the surrounding districts. In this respect one is constantly trying to avoid the Scylla of attempting too much by the fear of running on to the Charybdis of saying too little. It is all very well to deal with a square (in this case it is Covent Garden) in its entirety ; to record its historic and topographical annals ; to recall the great people and events with which it has been associated ; to bring one's history of it down to times within the memory of living people ; even to give (so far as one is capable of doing) a word picture of it as it is to-day known to us. But having done that, one is confronted by innumerable thoroughfares and by-ways : a little alley here, a mere passage or *cul-de-sac* there, which pathetically cries aloud to be included in the description and which has, not infrequently, some historic or anecdotic (so to term it) claim to be so dealt with. In the latter case, this does not matter, because such by-ways do not extend far, they, indeed, often end within the area with which the book is concerned. But the longer streets often wander so far into other and quite alien regions ; and if you begin to describe one end of one of them, where are you to stop ?

I invariably feel this difficulty when amiable publishers

(as all publishers, of course, are) suggest my writing about a place *and its surroundings*. It is so easy to say this, and then lightly to turn to other more important matters—novels and so forth; but the mere topographer (if I may arrogate to myself so learned and impressive a latinity) goes home and then begins to doubt his capability for judicious discrimination.

All this is to indicate to the readers that I have found some difficulty in *outlining* my subject in this book; that, indeed, the boundaries I have set myself have not been chosen without careful consideration. Indeed if any part of this book has been written in blood, it is that part which does not actually appear in print.

Everyone knows Covent Garden by name; some Londoners, and all American visitors, have been to it. Such investigators have had to pass through various streets to reach it, whether they have approached it from the west or the east, the north or the south. These streets I have described, and I have followed them from four main thoroughfares, the outworks, so to speak, of the citadel. These thoroughfares are St. Martin's Lane on the west, Drury Lane on the east, Long Acre on the north, and the Strand on the south. I could hardly have started from such interesting highways without saying something about them, and so I have ventured here and there to traverse well-known ground. My area, should anyone be curious enough to trace it on a plan of London, will be found to resemble a rhomboid, or is it a rhombus? (I have forgotten all my Euclid) in the vast entity of that world which for practical purposes we call London.

E. B. C.



## POSTSCRIPT TO THE PRECEDING NOTE

WERE I attempting a dry-as-dust account of the *Parish* of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, I should have had but little to alter in my arbitrary boundaries, and this is, of course, all luck. What the limits of that parish are have been stated by one of my many predecessors in the matter of London topography, and one of the best known at that—Strype. Here is how he defines the boundaries—a little complicated, perhaps, but with patience and a contemporary plan, say Rocque's, not difficult to follow :

“I shall,” he writes, “begin on the west side of the Duke of Bedford's House next the Strand where it crosseth into Maiden Lane and runneth on the Backside of the houses into Halfmoon Street, taking in both sides of this Lane : And from the Halfmoon Street it also runneth on the Backside of Shandois (Chandos) Street, on the south side into the Tallow-chandlers', which is a little beyond Round Court, where it crosseth the street, as also the houses betwixt Bedford Bury and Bedford Court, and so into New Street, which it crosseth, and runs down the Backside of White Rose Street, next to James Street, and falleth into Red Rose Street, where it crosseth the houses and falleth into Hart Street, on the Backside of the buildings next Long Acre, taking in part of James Street, by the Nagg's Head Inn ; and so along the Backside of Hart Street unto the corner of Bow Street : And there it crosseth into Red Lion Court, taking in all the houses except two or three next Bow Street ; and so along the Backside of Bow Street into Russel Street, two doors from the Rose Tavern ; and

thence crosseth the houses on the east side of Brydges Street, and falls into the West End of White Hart Yard, where it crosseth into Exeter Street and runneth along unto Bedford back wall, taking in the south side as aforesaid ; and at the Wall runs down the West Side of Curle Court into the Strand, and so to the Duke of Bedford's House where I began the inward bounds."

# THE ANNALS OF COVENT GARDEN AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

**W**ALFORD says, with good reason, that “ the region extending, to speak roughly, from St. Martin’s Lane on the west to Drury Lane on the east, and from Long Acre on the north to the Strand on the south—in other words, considerably less than half a mile the one way and a quarter of a mile the other—is remarkable as including in its circuit more of the literary, and, indeed, of human interest, than any other spot in modern or ancient London.”

This area was, during the eighteenth century, as the Connoisseur remarks, “ the acknowledged region of gallantry, wit, and criticism.” Indeed if we visualise it as it was in those, the high, days of its prosperity and fame, we shall realise how here more, perhaps, than in any other spot in the city, a link was established between the brilliant denizen of the west end and the often struggling author from the purlieus of Fleet Street and Grub Street. As one paces the stones of Covent Garden and its immediate vicinity, one is walking in the footsteps of innumerable great ones. The ghosts of authors and actors, of men of action and men of thought, of great and beautiful women and brilliant beaux, crowd about one ; and in spite of the drastic changes which have overtaken this part of London, it is less difficult here than in many other centres to conjure up the more decorative period of Queen Anne and the Georges, although there are really but few architectural relics

remaining from those now remote days. Dryden and his court at Will's ; Addison and his circle at Button's ; Dick Steele (that lovable figure) going into Tom's, and Dr. Johnson sedulously touching the posts on his way to Davies's book-shop ; Boswell hurrying thither to have his momentous interview with the great man, all swim into our ken, together, in a riotous *olla podrida* of wit and learning, with earlier and later figures. The Earl of Bedford who dominated this area and Inigo Jones busy over " the handsomest barn " in England ; solemn John Evelyn lodging here, and friendly Samuel Pepys knowing all about the taverns—and Dickens and some of his characters linking up reality with a fiction that is as real. Turner first seeing the sun in Maiden Lane (if the sun ever penetrates that narrow street) ; that sun to which he added so many enduring glories ; and Sheridan's eyes lighting up the alleys about Drury Lane.

From the days when this area was open fields ; then a garden connected with a monastic establishment ; to those when it became, as it remains, a garden heaped with native and foreign produce and catering for the horticultural and vegetarian wants of a great and populous city, Covent Garden has occupied a position which is *sui generis*. It is a market, but one which has attracted the attention of the idler as well as the shopper. Its dual character of wholesale and retail dealing ; its restriction to that sort of produce which has always had an appeal to the eye as well as to the grosser senses ; its position mid-way between the centres of fashion and the centres of trade, have all combined to give it a peculiar and attractive character. It has often been criticised ; the shafts of Mr. Punch's mordant wit have at times denounced its condition, and at one time Mud Salad Market was a phrase freely applied to it ; while more solemn indictments have been hurled against it by those who write letters to the papers and blush to find it fame. It has often been threatened ; and when the papers have nothing else to say, they delight in curdling the blood of those who hate to hear of any part of London being destroyed or changed, by the cry that " Covent Garden is to go." At one time it appeared always to



be in a state of sale. Mysterious gentlemen came and purchased it at immense sums (and how the papers love millions !). But nothing happened, and it goes on as it has gone on, heedless of time and defying augury—the same dear old Covent Garden of our youth, of our maturity, of our advancing years.

It has been supposed, by Strype among others, that a monastic building once existed where vegetables and flowers are now sold, but this was not the case. The fact is that this site was merely a garden attached to the Abbey of Westminster which owned, as we have seen, the property. It seems probable that the produce of this ground was more than the Abbot and monks of Westminster were capable of consuming, and that the surplus was sold to the community at large ; in which case the present market can claim a long and interesting tradition of existence. Part of the ground, we know, was also used as a place of burial for those who died in the monastery.

It is significant, as showing that the area was in those days unbuilt upon and merely regarded as garden ground, that Stow makes no mention of it, and even so much later as the year 1627, only two people are found rated in that part of the parish of St. Martin's specifically known as "Covent Garden." The fact is, of course, that with the coming of the Russells and the erection of their great house here, practically the whole of the seven acres was absorbed by them, and for a time Covent Garden represented merely their London abode with its adjoining gardens.

There is a tradition, mentioned by Newton, in his *London in the Olden Time*, that a pond of considerable extent once existed in or about the centre of Covent Garden, and that it was fed by a spring here, and intermittently added to by some of the many streams which run from the northern heights to the Thames, and percolate London at various points. In this case the water feeding the pond would have found an outlet to the river at Ivy Bridge in the Strand. The fact that Agas does not indicate such a piece of water on his 1560-70 plan of London, does not necessarily invalidate such a

tradition, as in those days cartography was in its infancy, and the map-maker sought rather to give a general idea of an area than to set down every detail with the care with which such things are now done.

We see, by a reference to this plan, however, that this then outlying part of London, later to become Covent Garden, was then open ground studded with trees such as were no doubt intended to represent the orchard belonging to the then royal owners of the land hereabouts, and a pond or spring might easily be there without Agas thinking it worth while specially to indicate it. What is shown, is a building, standing approximately on a portion of what was later to become the gardens of Bedford House, and this was in all probability the cow-shed and cow-keeper's lodging, as cattle are represented scattered about the adjoining ground—the cattle in this case being, as we shall see, the property of the Crown.

The land on which Covent Garden and its immediate *congeries* of streets were subsequently to be formed originally belonged, as I have said, to the Abbey of Westminster, which owned, indeed, most of the property in this neighbourhood. A certain portion of this estate was allocated, as we have seen, for use as a sort of market garden with another portion set apart as a burial ground, both being for the special use of the Abbot and his monks. But it had been customary to let off other parts of the property, and the first lessee appears to have been Sir John Fortescue, who already held Long Acre on lease from the Mercers' Company. We find Sir John granting to the Mayor and Corporation, for a term of one hundred and eighty years, the right to dig and break such ground as they should require in a part known as The Mewes Close, a portion of the ground on the west and so called in consequence of its proximity to the Royal Mews (now Trafalgar Square), as well as in other lands owned by him in Middlesex. Similar rights were granted by Sir John of further portions of Covent Garden, but in this case the leases were restricted in length by his interest in the property.

In course of time, even, perhaps, under Fortescue's





SECTION OF ROCQUE'S PLAN  
 (dated 1746)  
 Shewing the Covent Garden area.



tenancy, the Abbey evidently let on lease the garden itself, for in 1536 we find it being held by one Henry Dingley, under a lease granted to Sir Richard Weston by the Abbot of Westminster, and on December 20th of that year Dingley demised his lease to one Richard Browne. In the comparatively recently discovered plan of this district, dated 1585, the extent of the ground thus leased, which is then described as "The Earl of Bedford's—Covent Garden," is approximately what is now bounded by St. Martin's Lane on the west, Chandos Street on the south, Long Acre on the north, and Bedford Street on the east.

It was, however, in the year 1536 that Henry VIII obtained from the Abbot of Westminster, Covent Garden and seven acres of land adjoining it on the north side. The consideration obtained by the Abbey authorities for surrendering this valuable property to the King was the bestowal on the Abbot and monks of certain lands belonging to the disestablished Priory of Hurley, in Berkshire<sup>1</sup>; an easy and advantageous method of paying for so valuable a site, although when Henry obtained other property in this neighbourhood, from Abingdon Abbey, as well as from the Mercers' Company, and from private owners, he was obliged to pay for it in cash.

As a matter of fact in early days the Abingdon Abbey lands had appertained to the Abbot and monks of Westminster, but they had, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, been demised to William Charles, son of Sir Edward Charles.<sup>2</sup> In 1334, his son, another William Charles, sold them to Sir John Stonor, and at least a portion of the property was resold, by a later Stonor, in 1478, to the Abbot of Abingdon, from whom, in 1536, Henry VIII purchased it. Other lands obtained by the King, in this instance by exchange, were those belonging to the Master of Burton Lazar, while the Mercers' property acquired by him at the same time completed this vast deal in landed property. As, however, these purchases and exchanges concerned that part of the area lying to the west of St. Martin's Lane, they need not here concern us; but they are interesting as showing

<sup>1</sup> See Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum*.

<sup>2</sup> Kingsford.



Henry's foresight in buying ground which was in course of time to become invaluable. It is, too, pertinent to our subject, in that it was about the time of these negotiations, that is, in the year 1536, that the King acquired the site known as Covent Garden and the seven acres adjoining.

It is conjectured by Mr. Kingsford that the reason for Henry's wholesale acquisition of property in this part of London was "the necessity for having control of the land from which the water-supply for the new Palace at Whitehall was derived," there being at least two conduits existing on it, and as has been noted the tradition of at least one bond. That this is so seems to be borne out by the fact that having thus gained the necessary powers in the property, the King was ready to recoup himself by granting leases of it to a variety of people. With regard to Covent Garden itself, however, it was the other way about, for the property, at that time held by one Henry Dingley, under a lease granted to Sir Richard Weston, by the Abbot of Westminster, and demised, as we have seen, to Richard Browne, was required for the royal use probably as pasturage for sheep, for which purpose we find it utilised in 1547; and Browne was in consequence required by Sir Richard Riche, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentation, acting on the royal behalf, to surrender his rights. This he did, but his superior landlord, Dingley, was not found to be so amenable, as he refused to accept the compensation offered him by the Crown. He, indeed, went further, and instituted proceedings in the Court of Chancery against Browne for having forfeited his rights. It is interesting to know that the rent paid at this time for Covent Garden was £5 6s. 8d. Apparently the matter must have been settled, as between the recalcitrant Dingley on the one hand and first his tenant Browne and then the Crown on the other, for we know that some ten years later the royal sheep were browsing (as we see them in Agas's plan) on the grass which anticipated the stones of the Covent Garden of later times.

A few years later the property was destined to be

bestowed on one of those nobles whom a king (in this case Edward VI) delighted to honour and compensate for services rendered, and thus we find Covent Garden being granted to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, then Protector of the Realm, shortly after the young monarch had mounted the throne. Seymour, who filled perhaps more public offices than any man who has served the State for an equally short period, had become what was called Governor of the King's Person on the latter's accession, and was no doubt able to make himself master of whatever he wanted, and he was a man who wanted, and obtained, much. His career is here outside our province, but it is common knowledge that his restless activity and his revolutionary policy, combined with the ambition of his rival the Duke of Northumberland, at length brought about his downfall. He was in many respects anything but an amiable man, but he seems to have had the art of gaining the popular sympathy, which was shown to such an extent when he was condemned to death, that special precautions had to be resorted to when the sentence was carried out. The Duke's execution, which he underwent with a calmness and nobility that had not been evident in many of his earlier actions, took place on January 22nd, 1552, in the fifty-second year of his age. But it was three years before this, notably in 1549, on the attainder of the Duke, that his property, including Covent Garden, had reverted to the Crown, and although for a time (in May 1550) much of his property had been restored to him, he lost all when again apprehended and sent to the Tower.

Covent Garden had now once more become an appanage of the Crown, and was in the state in which it is shown in Agas's plan, that is, as a pasturage for the Royal cattle, in which capacity, by the way, it is referred to in the Minister's Accounts for the first year of Edward VI's reign. Six years later (1553) the property, that is Covent Garden and the seven acres called Long Acre, and then of the yearly value of £6 6s. 8d., was granted to John Russell, "to be held in soccage and not in capite,"<sup>1</sup> as it was phrased.

<sup>1</sup> Strype, Book 6, p. 88.

John Russell, that remarkable man who founded one of the most important of our great territorial families, rose from being a gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Henry VII to an earldom. He was both a successful soldier (he had suppressed the Lincolnshire rebellion in 1537 and the rising in the west in 1549, besides having served as a captain in the English Army in France in 1523) and an able negotiator (he was secret envoy to Charles V in 1523 and to the Pope, Clement VII, in 1527), and from those days onwards filled a number of important political posts, until his death in 1555. His portrait by Holbein shows him as a man of an alert, somewhat stern appearance, while Lloyd, in his *State Worthies*, quaintly describes him as "of a middle stature, neither tall to formidableness, nor short to a contempt; straight and proportioned, vigorous and active." Such was the man, a once determined opponent of Somerset, who succeeded his rival in the ownership of this large and importantly situated London property, and whose descendants held it down to our own day.

The Earl appears to have lost no time in erecting a residence on his new domain. Exactly what it was like is not clear, but it seems to have been chiefly constructed of wood, and probably resembled rather one of those country houses of the period whose picturesqueness so largely appeals to our present-day artistic sense, than an urban mansion of say the Holland House or Northumberland House type. That it was well built and durable is, however, evidenced by the fact that it remained till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it shared the fate of some of the other neighbouring private palaces in being demolished, the Russell family having by then moved to their new and far more imposing abode in Bloomsbury.

The gardens attached to the house extended northwards and were bounded by a wall which shut them in from the ground then still undeveloped, which was in course of time to become the market more or less as we know it to-day. An adjacent part of the Earl's property was let by him to Sir William Cecil, afterwards to be



better known as Lord Burleigh. The lease of this, dated 1570, is given in volume 30 of *Archæologia*, which I refrain from giving here, as I think my readers will prefer to "take it as read," as the phrase is.

By this lease we learn that Sir William Cecil had already been for some time in occupation of the site for which a regular lease was now granted him ; we can also estimate from it, more or less, the exact position of this portion of the Bedford estate : it lying on the east of Covent Garden itself from which it appears to have been divided by posts and rails, and extending to what is now Bow Street (described in the lease as "the comune highwaye that leadeth from Stronde (the Strand) to St. Giles-in-the-Fields"), from which it was separated by a mud wall. Cecil already owned property abutting on Covent Garden on the south where his orchard, extending presumably between what are now Southampton and Burleigh Streets, was situated. This orchard lay back from the Strand, having certain tenements and their back gardens between it and the highway, and it was divided from the latter by a similar wall to that on the Bow Street frontage.

Of the above-mentioned tenements the Whyte Harte Tavern is specifically mentioned. I may state parenthetically that this inn was at this period kept by a certain Humphrey Gosling who died in 1586, and to whom there is an epitaph in the Savoy Chapel which runs as follows :

"Here lieth Humphrey Gosling, of London, vintner,  
Of the Whyt Hart of this parish a neighbor  
Of virtuous behaviour, a very good archer  
And of honest mirth, a very good company keeper,  
So well inclyned to poore and rich  
God send more Goslings to be sich."<sup>1</sup>

Sir William Cecil's mansion, known variously as Cecil, Burleigh, and Exeter, House, was erected originally on

<sup>1</sup> There should be, of course, a comma or semicolon in the second line after the word "parish," as otherwise it might be assumed that Gosling was merely a neighbour of the White Hart.

the site of a rectory-house attached to the church of St. Clement Danes, which had "a garden and close for the parson's horse," by Sir Thomas Palmer, who had obtained the site in the reign of Edward VI. Palmer pulled down the old buildings and "rebuilt the same of brick and timber very large and spacious"; indeed so elaborately, for the period, that the mansion was described as a magnificent one. Palmer, who was known as "buskin Palmer," was at one time a henchman of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, whose plans he later betrayed, but, together with that nobleman, was subsequently accused of high treason, and his property, including the mansion he had erected, was forfeited to the Crown. Although in February 1552 he had received a free pardon, other charges were subsequently brought against him, and being again apprehended, on July 25th, 1553, he was sent to the Tower together with the Duke of Northumberland and others. On the following August 19th he was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, a sentence for which beheading was subsequently substituted, and he suffered death on Tower Hill three days later, the Duke and Sir John Gates undergoing a similar fate at the same time.

On Queen Elizabeth's succession Palmer's property in Covent Garden was granted to Sir William Cecil who, according to Stow, "farre more beautifully encreased" the mansion, which then became known as Cecil House. In Norden's account of Middlesex, preserved among the Harleian MSS., is the following account of the place: "The house of the ryght honourable Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer of England and by him erected. Standinge on the north side of the Stronde, a verie fayre howse raysed with bricks, proportionable adorned with four turrets placed at the four quarters of the howse; within it is curioslye beautified with rare devises, and especially the oratory placed in an angle of the great chamber." Norden adds that "unto this is annexed on the east a proper howse of the honourable Sir Robert Cecill, Knight, and of Her Mats. most honourable Prevy Councyle." This latter mansion was later to be known as Wimbledon House,



about which I shall have something to say later in this chapter.

The exact position of these two houses is shown in contemporary plans. Cecil House is seen facing the Strand, with its gardens extending from the garden-wall of Wimbledon House to a then green lane now represented by Southampton Street. Hollar's bird's-eye plan of what was then the west central part of London, gives us a clear idea of Wimbledon House, with the immense erection of Cecil, then known as Exeter House, immediately to its west ; while even in the cruder, less exact, delineation of this part, by Faithorne, executed some years earlier, in 1658 to be exact, we can see the two mansions, Cecil House forming a projection into the Strand, as its successor Exeter 'Change did in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The princely style kept up here by Sir William Cecil, or Lord Burleigh as he was later to become, is evidenced by a passage in *Desiderata Curiosa*, where it is stated that his housekeeping charges when he was in residence amounted to between £40 and £50 a week. He employed no fewer than eighty servants, and his stables alone cost him 1000 marks yearly. Besides this, he had the upkeep of Theobalds and Burleigh on his hands, as well as heavy expenses at Court, and he is known to have given away upwards of £500 a year in charity. A princely peer !

Lord Burleigh kept a journal, and in an entry for July 14th, 1561, he tells us that Queen Elizabeth "supped at my house in the Strand before it was fully finished." Machyn, in his Diary, also records the circumstance, but places the visit a day earlier : "The xiii day of July—the same nyght the Queen's grace whent from the Charterhouse by Clerkynewelle over the fields unto the Savoy unto Mestre secretore Syssel to soper, and ther was the Counsell and many lordes and knyghts and ladies and gentyll-women, and ther was grett chere tyll mydenyght." On another occasion the Queen came to see Burleigh here, and finding him suffering from the gout, bade him sit in her presence, saying : "My lord, we make use of you not for the badness of

your legs but for the goodness of your head." There is also a tradition that once when arriving at Cecil House, decorated with the elaborated head-dress which she affected, one of the servants asked her to stoop in going through a low doorway. "For your master's sake I will stoop," she said, "but not for the King of Spain."

In Massingham's *Journal*, it is recorded that Tarleton, the famous comedian and jester of the period, was wont to call "Burley House gate in the Strand towards the Savoy, the Lord Treasurer's Almes-gate, because it was seldom or never opened," a remark hardly borne out by the fact (noted above) of Lord Burleigh's charity. But wits are proverbially prone to falsify facts for the sake of a jest.

Burleigh, whose daughter Elizabeth had been born here in 1564, died at Burleigh House on August 4th, 1598, and was succeeded in the tenancy of the place by his son Thomas Cecil who was created Earl of Exeter in 1605; on which occasion, it is said, the name of the mansion was changed from Cecil to Burleigh House, although, as we have seen, Tarleton, who died in 1588, calls it by the latter. It was probably referred to in a general way under both titles after its builder had been created a peer.

It would seem that Lord Exeter did not habitually occupy the place, for, in 1617, Lady Hatton, who had previously lived in Hatton House (where Hatton Gardens are now), the widow of the famous Sir Christopher, Queen Elizabeth's "dancing Chancellor," is found renting it, and in the same year entertaining James I and Anne of Denmark here, although true to her resentment against her second husband, Sir Edward Coke, she would not allow him to be of the company, notwithstanding that the King himself had desired his company.

Six years later, when the "Spanish Match" between Prince Charles and the Infanta was still regarded as a possibility, James I wished to rent the house for the reception of the Spanish princess who was expected to pay a visit to England. It so happened, however, that Lord Exeter had died in the February of this year and, besides, the place seems to have been already let to several

people, on what would to-day be called the flat system. For this latter reason the new peer, while complying in a hesitant way with the Royal request, replied that "he could not find it in his heart to bid those in it begone, especially Lord Denny," and he shifts the responsibility of giving the tenants notice to quit on to the Lord Treasurer's shoulders. The latter arranged the matter satisfactorily, and on June 17th "the Spanish Ambassador was conveyed with many coaches to Exeter House which had been richly furnished and redecorated for his reception."<sup>1</sup>

In the following reign the oratory attached to the mansion, to which we have seen Norden referring as specially decorative, was fitted up as a Roman Catholic place of worship for the use of Henrietta Maria, at the time when the Duchess of Richmond (Frances Howard, Dowager Countess of Hertford, married to Ludovic Stuart, created Duke of Richmond in 1623, a year before his death) was occupying the house. Curiously enough, it was in this very chapel that Evelyn, who was attending the celebration on Christmas Day, 1657, was, with other communicants, detained by Puritan soldiers, on the grounds that such superstitious observances were no longer permitted. After being examined, however, they were allowed to depart, the officers in charge dismissing Evelyn "with much pity for his ignorance."

After the Great Fire, Exeter House, as it was now called, was rented by the Government for the accommodation of the Court of Arches and Prerogative Courts, which the destruction of Doctors' Commons had left houseless. Later still we find the Earl of Shaftesbury occupying, probably only a portion of, the mansion; and here, in 1671, was born his grandson, the third Earl, famous as the author of *Characteristics*. As Lord Shaftesbury had become the son-in-law of the third Earl of Exeter, in 1650, the place was in all likelihood lent to him until 1676, when he moved to Thanet or Shaftesbury House, in Aldersgate Street. An interesting circumstance connected with Lord Shaftesbury's tenancy of Exeter House, is that here John Locke lived with the

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers.*



family (as he continued to do in Thanet House) in the dual capacity of physician and tutor to the son and heir, Lord Ashley, and that during this period he was working on his great book, the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

With the departure of Lord Shaftesbury, the history of Exeter House ends, for it was soon afterwards demolished, its site being covered by streets and houses and the once well-known Exeter 'Change. The property, however, remained in the Cecil family till 1855, when the then Marquess of Exeter sold it for something over £50,000.

I have incidentally referred to Norden's mention of the residence of Sir Robert Cecil as being "annexed on the east" to Cecil or Exeter House; this mansion was known as Wimbledon House, and was so called because it had been erected, probably towards the close of the sixteenth century, by the famous soldier, Sir Edward Cecil, third son of the first Earl of Exeter, who was created Viscount Wimbledon in 1625, and died without issue thirteen years later at the age of sixty-seven. As Norden speaks of Sir Robert Cecil occupying the house, one can only assume that a previous residence stood here, before Sir Edward Cecil built Wimbledon House. Sir Robert became first Earl of Salisbury, and Sir Edward was his half-nephew, being the son of his half-brother Thomas, created Earl of Exeter in 1605.

Wimbledon House is said to have been designed by Inigo Jones; but much has been attributed to this great architect with which he had nothing directly to do; and I do not vouch for the fact. Anyhow, it must have been an imposing structure, and Strype calls it "a very handsome house." It had, however, but a short existence, for in 1620 most of it was destroyed by fire, probably by incendiaries, as Wimbledon House at Wimbledon had been on the previous day; what remained being finally pulled down in 1782. Wellington Street (which might have been Wimbledon Street, following other instances in this vicinity) runs through a portion of the gardens attached to Wimbledon House itself, approximately at this point.

It seems obvious that Sir William Cecil's object in obtaining a lease of the ground between Covent Garden and Bow Street was in order to link up the gardens attached to his town-house with his orchard, which as we have seen had hitherto been separated from them. That he also utilised a portion of his new possession for practical purposes is, too, evidenced by the fact that buildings used either as stabling or for domestic purposes were erected by him on this ground ; for Strype, describing the beginnings of the separate parish of Covent Garden (as it was to become), remarks that the land on which it was built "was formerly fields with some thatched houses, stables and suchlike which lying in so good a place, the owner (i.e. the Earl of Bedford) of the said ground did think good to make an Improvement thereof, and procuring an act of Parliament for the making of it into a Parish of itself, disunited from St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, did about the year 1634-5, begin to pull down the said old buildings, and clear away the rubbish, and laid it out in several fair streets, straight and uniform."

In the early years of the seventeenth century the Cecils, in the person of the Earl of Salisbury, had apparently made an offer for the bulk of Lord Bedford's property in this area, for in the *Calendar of State Papers* there is a letter from Edward, Earl of Bedford, to the Earl of Salisbury, dated April 27th, 1610, in which a passage occurs stating that "he (Lord Bedford) could not sell his inheritance of Covent Garden, having bound himself under a heavy penalty not to impoverish further himself by the sale of his property."

But if unwilling to sell, the Earl of Bedford had no objection to granting leases of such parts of Covent Garden as he did not himself require, and among these is one which Strype thus specifies : "I find," he writes, "a lease dated the 10th day of March 1631 in the seventh year of the reign of King Charles I, granted by Francis, Earl of Bedford, to John Powell of Little Thorocke, in the county of Essex, Clerk ; and to Edward Palmer, of the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, in the county of Middlesex, Gent, son of Edward Palmer, late



citizen and Girdler, of London, lately deceased ; and John Barnard of London, he having let unto the former Edward Palmer, the Father, all the piece or parcel of ground of the said Earl's pasture called Covent Garden and Long Acre ; one of them lying on the south side of a parcel of ground then laid forth for a new churchyard, containeth in length, from a parcel of ground then preserved for a Vestry House ; on the east, 180 feet and 3 inches of Assize, and in Breadth, from a parcel of ground then laid forth for a street, way or Passage of 50 foot broad on the south side of the said piece of ground laid forth for the said churchyard on the North, 33 foot of assize, and all other Convenience for Building, to hold for 34 years to come, from the date aforesaid at the yearly rent of seventeen pounds and six pence, payable Quarterly, at or in the Dining Hall of the said Earl's, commonly called Bedford House in the Strond, of the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields."

It was on this ground that Edward Palmer, the Father, as he is called in the lease, erected at his own expense "nine several Messuages or Tenements" ; and this building development may be regarded as the earliest attempt to convert the fields and garden of an earlier day into bricks and mortar, thus forming the nucleus of the present Covent Garden area.

One or two interesting facts emerge from the wording of the lease just given. Thus a portion of the ground had already been allocated for the site of a projected church, as well as for a vestry-house ; and a street had been provided, for although it is difficult to say which particular thoroughfare this was it may probably have been King Street or Henrietta Street. Incidentally, too, it is interesting to know that the Earl, as ground-landlord, received his quarterly rents in the great hall of his adjacent mansion.

We can thus visualise the earlier pre-market Covent Garden (for the Patent for the Market was not granted till 1671) as consisting of the owner's town mansion, the church, and parson's dwelling ; the open space surrounded by its piazzas, and here and there such dwellings as Palmer, who was responsible, as we have seen, for

nine houses, and others, had by then erected on the ground leased to them by the Earl.

The best idea we can obtain of the area under consideration shortly after this time, is that which is afforded by that remarkably industrious and accurate artist, the great and unique Hollar.

His plan of what is called the west-central district of London, a bird's-eye view such as might to-day be taken from an aeroplane by an expert photographer, shows us how far advanced building had here progressed by the middle of the seventeenth century. Hollar's "view" was executed approximately in 1648; and as will be seen by the accompanying reproduction of that portion of it covering the area dealt with in this book, the whole of Covent Garden and its purlieus were by then thickly covered by streets and dwellings. We see the Piazza, with a tree in the centre, surrounded on two sides by arcaded houses; we see the chapel (St. Paul's), and the gardens and garden-wall of Bedford House, which itself faces the Strand and apparently extends up the west side of the inner courtyard; we see Cecil or Exeter House, of far higher and more pretentious elevation, to the east, and Wimbledon House tucked away beyond it, at the point where the main thoroughfare becomes wider. In addition we can trace many of the streets, Henrietta Street, King Street, Long Acre, Chandos Street, Hart Street (now Floral Street), a portion of Bow Street, and so forth, all lying within our boundaries.

But a comparison of this view and a modern plan will show great changes in the matter of street formation. For instance, practically none of the by-ways which now run into the Strand at this point is present in the older survey, and we shall look there in vain for Bedford Street, Southampton Street, Burleigh Street, or, of course, Wellington Street. Some of these, so far as their northern portions are concerned, however, were there and may be distinguished: such as Bedford Street, formed in 1637; and we can trace Maiden Lane, where Andrew Marvell lived, by the way; York Street, Russell Street, and other lesser thoroughfares.

There was a great building development in this part

of London during the 'thirties of the seventeenth century, and it was then that this area first began really to emerge as an integral portion of the city. Before, it had been but more or less open ground with several large and important houses studded about it. In the space of some seventy to eighty years had thus arisen a small town, with its market-place (if not its actually as yet recognised market), its church, its fashionably inhabited houses, and its private palaces, on the spot which Agas, in 1560, shows as open and unsophisticated as St. Giles's Fields (to take an example) is shown by Hollar to have been nearly a century later.

The development of Covent Garden, which in its completed form bore some analogy to the Place des Vosges, in Paris, in a sense did for what was even then a not unfashionable part of London, what the creation of St. James's Square, by the Earl of St. Albans, effected for the more westerly portion of the city some thirty years later. In both instances isolated houses of importance already stood in the respective areas, but it was the systematic laying out of a large space, in each case, that consolidated the neighbourhood into one of special importance and gave to each a special and homogeneous character. The subsequent history of these two quadrates, as squares used to be termed by old topographers, has been widely different. St. James's Square has remained down to our own day a centre of aristocratic dwelling, and even if, as is but too obvious, it is now becoming gradually changed, with clubs and institutions and even commercial establishments occupying the spots where once the great ones of three centuries foregathered, it still retains something of its hold on fashion and can still boast the presence of great names associated, in certain cases, with the homes in which their ancestors lived, and in the case of at least one, which their ancestors themselves built.<sup>1</sup>

Covent Garden, and by Covent Garden I here indicate the more restricted signification of the word, that

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk House. But, as I write, I hear that this great house, in a portion of which, lying behind the present structure, George III was born, is to be sold.



is, the portion of the area which is confined to that section of it where the piazzas surround the central square, has long since forgotten its one-time famous residents, and few of its great houses remain. Its vegetarian commerce has endowed it with an entirely alien atmosphere, and subsequent rebuilding has further eradicated a certain stateliness which in spite of growing changes clung to it for many years.

There is no doubt that the Earl of Bedford who was responsible for the development of the estate, was a man of far-seeing character. He realised that here, close to the then main artery between the city and the village of Westminster, was an ideal spot for a market, which should serve as an emporium for those living in the neighbourhood, as well as for the more immediate use of such as inhabited the houses on his estate. The Earl of Oxford and Mortimer did much the same, doubtless from similar reasons, in creating Oxford Market, off Oxford Street, at a later date. At the time of Lord Bedford's development the nearest important centre for the buying and selling of food-stuffs was the Stocks Market, where the Mansion House is now ; and as the citizens migrated westward that centre was becoming daily of less convenience to the residents in the west, and indeed had its work cut out in catering for the growing population in the east. But if the Earl recognised the advantages of erecting a market near the Strand, he was also alive to the benefit to be obtained by erecting dwellings in this then most westerly of London's residential areas. That he had grave difficulties with which to contend in respect to the latter aspect of the matter is certain ; for repeated Acts for the restriction of houses, and the virtual banishment of residents during certain months in the year, had been passed in then quite recent times. Thus in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and again in that of James I, orders had been issued to this effect, and not dissimilar attempts had been made to lessen the population of London in that of Charles I, only, indeed, a few years before the Earl of Bedford

inaugurated his scheme for increasing the number of London's houses.

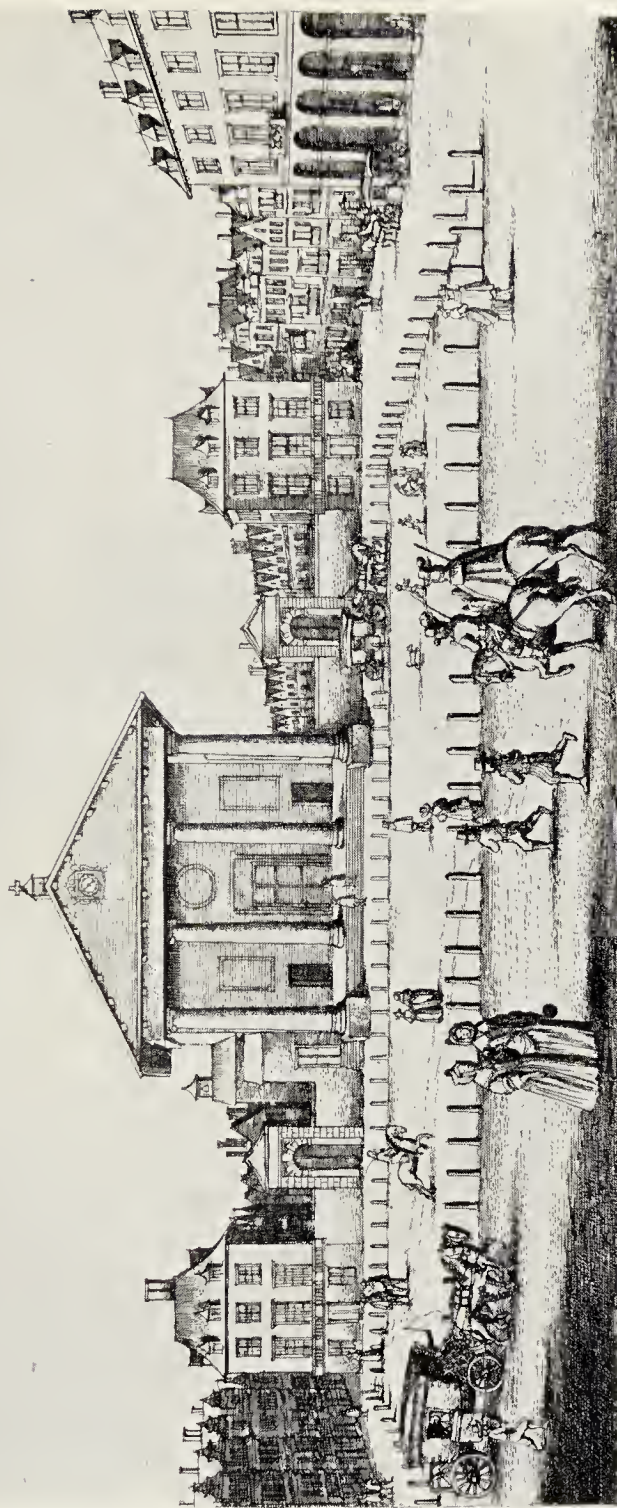
How the Earl was enabled thus to fly in the teeth of official opposition is a question. But he was great and powerful, and in those days great nobles found means to overcome such difficulties, either through Court favour or by the payment of money to some Court favourite, or by other means which then did not appear as unusual or reprehensible as they would do in these more squeamish and critical times. Whatever happened to oil the wheels of architectural activity, that activity took place, and the Earl, bent on developing his property in an artistic and substantial way, sought the aid of the great architect of the age—Inigo Jones.

At that time Inigo Jones had not only made his mark as an architect, but was familiar to the Royal Family and to the Court as the organiser, with Ben Jonson, of those "Masques" which were favourite forms of amusement under James I and took on an added beauty and artistry under the fostering care of his cultivated successor. In 1610 he had been appointed Surveyor of the Works to Henry, Prince of Wales, and in this capacity had done much subsidiary work at St. James's and Richmond. But no signed design of his is known earlier than 1616, and the period between the death of Prince Henry and that date was occupied by travels in Italy, where he studied the works of Palladio, Vitruvius, and other native architects at first hand and to such good purpose. On his return he was made Surveyor of the Works to King James, an office which could hardly have been remunerative in itself, since the salary was small and was generally in arrears.

In 1616 he was busy over the plans of what was to be known as "The Queen's House," at Greenwich Palace, the original drawings for which are preserved at Worcester College, Oxford; and in the following year he designed the new chapel in Lincoln's Inn, the only authenticated instance of his use of Gothic. In 1618 he was appointed one of the Commissioners for the laying out of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was desired to prepare a plan for this development. There is extant a rare, if



PIAZZA in Conventgarden,



THE PIAZZA, COVENT GARDEN

*After an etching by W. Hollar, circa 1640*



not unique, print, attributed to Hollar, showing the architect's elaborate and complete scheme, of which only a few fragments—Lindsey House, on the west side, among them—materialised. The work Inigo Jones did here, and still more the vast scheme which he adumbrated, must have materially helped him when he was commissioned to lay out Covent Garden some ten or twelve years later.

The grandiose scheme for Whitehall Palace, of which the lovely fragment of the Banqueting House is all that was actually completed, occupied the architect about this period, and his work as Surveyor of the Royal Palaces, and his investigations into the origin of Stonehenge, undertaken at the desire of King James, filled up the remainder of his time, so that nothing further of architectural importance in London seems to have emanated from him during the rest of that King's reign.

With the accession of the one really artistic monarch by whom we have been governed, it might be supposed that Inigo Jones's genius would have been still further recognised. He had already designed Wimbledon House in the Strand, and he was now commissioned by the Duke of Buckingham to erect that water-gate which still remains the only survival of the favourite's splendid palace. Three years later (in the meanwhile he had done notable work at Oxford and elsewhere) the Earl of Bedford engaged him to lay out Covent Garden and to build a church in the piazzas which were projected.

When the Earl of Bedford granted the leases to the Cecils and others, already referred to, they provided for the building scheme which he had in mind, and such portions of the Covent Garden estate as he then let were outside the area which he had reserved for development, a development whose alignment is to some extent still defined by the market and its rebuilt piazzas and church.

But there appears to have been a number of old buildings studded about this otherwise more or less derelict space, probably remains of monastic days: gardeners' cottages and sheds and so forth, and these were demolished in order to leave a clear space for the intended improvements.

Of these developments the church was one of the first buildings to be erected, but I shall have something to say of this structure in another chapter, and therefore I need not enlarge on it here. As we shall see, it was not till 1638, or some five years after it had been begun, that this church was consecrated ; certain difficulties that arose in connection with its patronage and the creation of a separate parish having helped largely to delay its completion.

As in the case of other of Inigo Jones's conceptions—Lincoln's Inn Fields and Whitehall Palace are outstanding cases in point—his original designs for the construction of the buildings forming the central portion of Covent Garden were destined to remain uncompleted. His scheme was to surround the entire square by a series of piazzas, then a new form of architectural design borrowed, of course, as the name implies, from Italy. What he was able to accomplish is the best proof of how excellent would have been the whole. Even James Ralph, that generally very captious critic, could write a century and a half later to this effect concerning it : " Covent Garden," he affirms, " would have been, beyond dispute, one of the finest squares in the universe, if finished on the plans that Inigo Jones first designed for it ; and if he deserves the praise of the design, we very justly incur the censure for wanting spirit to put it into execution. The Piazza is grand and noble, and the superstructure it supports light and elegant."

What Ralph indicates as to the spirit being lacking to complete the architect's design, refers probably to some suggestion towards this end, made and set aside during the eighteenth century. For it is fairly obvious that the Earl of Bedford had already incurred too great an expense over what had already been achieved to be enabled to find the money for a still more complete undertaking.

It thus resulted that only two sides of the quadrangle were finished : that on the north which came to be known as the Great Piazza, and that on the east, called the Little Piazza.

Besides these piazzas, Inigo Jones designed certain



important private houses, in the style with which he had already adorned some of the neighbouring thoroughfares. Some of these were not erected till after his death, and then under the superintendence of his son-in-law and pupil, James Webb. The beautiful old house which formerly stood in Great Queen Street and in which Boswell once lived was probably one of these. This particular house (which is, however, outside our purview) was a fine specimen of the brickwork, then something of a novelty, in the construction of private dwellings of this period, and in this connection it is interesting to know that the piazzas of Covent Garden were among the earlier instances of the use of this material<sup>1</sup> in London.

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia*, I.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PIAZZAS AND THEIR RESIDENTS

**W**HAT the central portion of Covent Garden looked like soon after it was more or less completed, can be seen from an etching (undated but probably executed about the year 1640) which Hollar produced, and which is numbered seventy-nine in Mr. Lewis Hind's authoritative monograph on the great artist. The view is taken from the opening between the houses, on the east side (Russell Street), and shows us the central space enclosed merely by posts and without a tree in the centre, thus giving us an earlier prospect of it than that in the same etcher's West Central London plan, where the tree is shown and the space is completely enclosed by posts and rails.<sup>1</sup>

The chief feature in Hollar's 1640 etching, is the church which is shown flanked by a low wall in which are two lofty entrances into the church-yard, the extreme ends of the wall being occupied by houses of some importance. In view of the architectural features of these two buildings, as well as the whole design of the arcaded houses, I cannot but think that Inigo Jones, on his return from Italy, must have seen and studied the then recently erected *Place Royale* (now the *Place des Vosges*) at Paris, and culled from that exquisite achievement something of the design he drew out, on a simpler, though very analagous, style for Covent Garden. Anyone conversant with the French prototype, the annals of which have been recorded by M. Lucien Lambeau (*La Place Royale, Daragon*, 1906), will probably come to the same conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> At Wilton House there is preserved Inigo Jones's original coloured design for the piazza.

That a French visitor to London, during the reign of Charles II, had apparently been struck by this resemblance, is indicated by Sorbière, in his *Voyage En Angleterre*, in 1666. After telling us that he took lodgings in the Common Garden (as he calls it) quarter, that being the chosen abode of Frenchmen in London, he adds: "La place du Common-jardin n'est pas tout à fait grande que la place Royale; mais il est bien plus gai; soit parce qu'elle est en un lieu un peu élevé, soit parce qu'il n'y a des maisons basties que de deux cotés, que le troisième est le frontispiece d'un Temple de fort belle Architecture, et que le quatrième est occupé par les jardins du Palais de Bethfordt, dont on voit les arbres par dessus la Muraille, qui est fort basse." "Les maisons," he adds, "de ces deux faces parvissent plus magnifiques que les nostres, à cause que les arcades sont plus hautes, que la Portique est plus large, qu'il est relevé de deux marches, et qu'il est pavé de grands carreaux de marbre de Liège."

Hollar entitles his etching "Piazza in Convent Garden"; and it would be interesting to know (some one with more patience than I will, I daresay, find out) when the now familiar "Covent" was substituted for the more proper spelling and pronunciation of the name.

The houses on the north side, and those on the east, on the north of Russell Street, were known generically as "The Great Piazza"; while those on the east, on the south of Russell Street, were termed "The Little Piazza." The latter after the fire which destroyed many of them in 1769, were rebuilt but without the arcade, and thus much of the homogeneity of Inigo Jones's conception was lost in the reconstruction.

In Hollar's West London plan, will be seen a thickly planted grove of trees immediately to the east of Bedford House garden and extending from the Piazza southward for a considerable distance. This is the grove which Strype refers to as "a small grotto of trees," and as he adds that it was "most pleasant in the summer time," the assumption is that it was an open promenade, although, according to the plan, the wall of Bedford House garden appears to enclose it. It may be, of

course, that it was a kind of orchard attached to the Earl's grounds, and that Strype is making a merely general remark or one culled from his own experience only.

But certainly at a rather later date, it was open to all and sundry, for it was here that the first market was held, when some of the stalls skirted the garden-wall of Bedford House. This small beginning of what was in course of time to become a world-renowned centre of vegetarian and floral activity, does not appear to have been initiated till the latter half of the seventeenth century, and then the stalls and so forth were apparently of but a temporary character, although we find the churchwardens of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, on March 21st, 1656, paying "the Painter for painting the Benches and Seates in the Markett-place, the sum of £1. 10. 0," which indicates an official recognition of the market. Again, in 1666, payments are made from the same source, "for trees planted in the broad place," i.e. the central square.

The centre portion of the Piazza was covered with sand and was, we are told, uniformly well kept and dry. As time went on additions were made not only to the architectural features of this central portion, but also to its adornment in other ways. For instance, in 1668, the whole of the square was gravelled and wooden rails were erected in order to form an enclosure such as was common in the other London squares, before gardens were substituted for the more arid spaces; and as a central ornament a column with a sun-dial was erected, a feature thus described by Strype: "Within the rails is a stone Pillar or Column raised on a pedestal ascended by steps, on which is placed a curious Sun-Dial, four square, having above it a mound gilt with gold, all neatly wrought in Freestone."

Among the Churchwardens' accounts are several references to this column, by which we see that it was apparently erected by voluntary contribution, at least three important inhabitants being recorded as making donations towards it. Thus on November 27th, 1668, an entry reads: "For drawing a modell of the



column to be presented to the vestry, £0. 10. 0." It is not stated who received this sum, but the following tells us who was responsible for a portion of the work : "Dec. 2. 1668. To Mr. Wainwright for 4 gnomens, £0. 8. 6.," ; while three subsequent entries record some of the contributors :

Dec: 7. 1668. Received from the R<sup>t</sup> Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Earle of Bedford, as a gratuity towards erecting of ye column, £20. 0. 0.

Dec 7." „ — Received from the R<sup>t</sup> Hon<sup>ble</sup> Sir Charles Cotterell, Master of the Ceremonies, as a gift towards the said column, £10. 0. 0.

April 29." 1669. — Received from the R<sup>t</sup> Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Lord Denzill Holles, as a present towards erecting the column — £10. 0. 0."

It would appear that this column assumed very soon the character of one of those "cheapening crosses," as they were called, still to be found in some of our villages and, indeed, in certain instances giving their names to country towns such as Chipping Norton, Chipping Sodbury, and so on ; and we are told that milk and other things were sold by women who daily took up their position at its base ; a custom thus referred to in a contemporary poem :

"High in the midst of this most happy land  
A well-built marble pyramid does stand ;  
By which spectators know the time o' the day  
From beams reflecting of the solar ray ;  
Its basis with ascending steps is grac'd,  
Around whose area cleanly matrons plac'd,  
Vend their most wholesome food, by nature good,  
To cheer the spirits and enrich the blood."

As these lines were written in 1738, they prove that the column was in existence at least seventy years after its erection, although it is not known when it was actually demolished.

It was not long before the market increased in size and importance, for there was then, as I have before remarked, no similar centre nearer than the Stocks Market, and the growth of the Covent Garden area

necessitated the creation of something more satisfactory than the rather inchoate mass of booths and stalls which had hitherto been sufficient for the purpose. This being so, a Royal grant was made to William, 5th Earl of Bedford, that "handsome gentile man," as a contemporary calls him, which his portrait by Vandyck emphasises,<sup>1</sup> of the market, by letters patent dated May 12th, 1671. The Earl later granted to others a lease of the market, which, however, did not invade the central portion of the Piazza till the early years of the eighteenth century.

In the meanwhile the houses, then of red-brick with stone facings, in the Piazzas, had begun to be occupied by important people, and to take on that fashionable *cum* rakish air which resulted in their figuring as the *mises en scène* of a number of the contemporary plays illustrating the manners of the period. One can record some of the more illustrious of the inhabitants, without being strictly chronological. The Piazzas occur, for the first time, in the Rate Books under the year 1634, when Sir Edmund Verney is shown as owning the two houses at the east end, abutting on Russell Street, a lease of which had been granted him in that year. By this lease it appears that stabling was attached at the back of these dwellings, and that their chief windows were protected by shutters, while the fact that locks are mentioned as being on all the doors, indicates that such things were then considered sufficiently important to be specifically recorded. The space in front of these houses and the others adjoining was then known as the Portico Walk ; and the lease gives the ground-landlord power to "walk underneath the same messuage, commonly called the Portico Walk," although Sir Edmund Verney was to exercise the right of expelling youths who might disturb him by playing there. In the matter of drainage, there seem to have been some qualms on the part of the tenant who, of course, was aware that no sewer had yet been laid here, and he carefully arranges that, should any inconvenience be caused him in consequence, he

<sup>1</sup> He succeeded his father in 1641, at the age of 28, and was created a Duke in 1694, dying on September 7th, 1700.

should have the right by giving six months' notice, to determine his tenancy.<sup>1</sup>

In later days the abode was converted into the well-known Bedford Coffee House, a favourite resort of the literary, artistic, and theatrical people during the eighteenth century, and where Foote, in his selected corner, carried on, *mutatis mutandis*, the traditions of Dryden at Will's and Addison at Button's. At this time there used to be a Shilling Rubber Club here, among the members of which were Fielding and Goldsmith, Hogarth and Churchill, and it was at a meeting here that the latter two had their famous quarrel which resulted in Churchill's *Epistle to Hogarth*, and Hogarth's print entitled *The Bruiser*.

Besides these illustrious frequenters, many others at a slightly later period kept up the traditions of the house, as visitors, and here might have been seen from time to time, a galaxy of histrionic talent represented by Quin, Garrick, Arthur Murphy, Shuter, Macklin, as well as Pope and Sheridan (to throw chronology to the winds), and Horace Walpole ; while one must not forget that Harry Warrington, on his first coming to London, put up here.

Sometimes auctions of literary property were held here, and among these are recorded the sales of the library of Peter Le Neve, in 1731, and three years later a portion of that of the omniverous collector, Thomas Rawlinson.

But the Bedford Coffee House was not without its tragedies, for it was here that the Hon. John Damer, the husband of the once fashionable sculptress, Anne Seymour Damer, committed suicide, in 1776, two years after Dr. Desaguliers, the natural philosopher, had died in a room here, in great destitution ; while it was in front of the house that on the evening of April 17th, 1779, the Rev. James Hackman shot Miss Ray, as she was on her way to sing in *Love in a Village* at Covent Garden Theatre. The stage entrance was immediately opposite the "Bedford," and here it was that she fell mortally wounded.

<sup>1</sup> These facts are recorded in *The Verney Papers*, edited by the Camden Society.



Most people are, I suppose, familiar with the unhappy story of Hackman's infatuation for the young lady who was living at the time under Lord Sandwich's protection, that curious circumstance which Walpole considered "the strangest story he had ever heard." Hackman had been looking out of a window of the "Bedford" expecting Miss Ray to pass and when she did so, he went out and shot her. He tried to commit suicide on the spot, but was unsuccessful, and he was hanged at Tyburn ten days later. The whole story is told by Walpole, and Sir Herbert Croft later published a book called *Love and Madness*, consisting of the supposititious correspondence between the two unhappy people.

The annals of the well-known resort where so many notable ones once foregathered and which had its tragic memories, were published under the title of *Memoirs of the Bedford Coffee House*, first in 1751 and again in 1763. There and in Timb's *Clubs of London* will be found a variety of anecdotes connected with the place which crops up in the pages of contemporary publications with a frequency that attests the large part it occupied in the social life of London during the eighteenth century.

Returning to the earlier residents in the Piazza, we find Thomas Killigrew living in the north-west corner, between 1637 and 1643, and again, but this time in the north-east angle of the Square, from 1660 to 1662, so that his references to the place in his plays have something of a personal bearing. His house was later occupied by Aubrey de Vere, the twentieth and last of the Earls of Oxford, of that great family, who resided here from 1663 till 1673.

About the same time Denzill Holles, who then went under the name of Colonel Hollis (so given at least in the Rate Books), was living here, in 1644, in "the last faire house westward in the north portico of Covent Garden." Here he was succeeded by Sir Kenelm Digby, in 1662,<sup>1</sup> who had his laboratory here, and as Aubrey

<sup>1</sup> In the *Calendar of State Papers*, under date of July, 1661, we find the Danish Envoy, Simon de Petkum, writing to Secretary Nicholas from his lodgings in Covent Garden—no doubt, in the Piazza.



surmises, died here three years later ; what time Denzill Holles had moved to the house on the site of Evans's Hotel. Afterwards Nathaniel Crew, Bishop of Durham, resided, from 1681 to 1687, in the same house, on the door-step of which it was not unusual for foundlings to be laid, apparently in the hope that the benevolent prelate would adopt them, one and all.

To-day the Tavistock Hotel marks the site of a house which had a succession of notable occupants. For here lived Sir Peter Lely, who painted the great and beautiful of his day, as Reynolds did later in Leicester Square, from 1662 till his death in 1680. After him, his executor, Roger North, and his famous brother, Sir Dudley North, occupied the house, the latter dying here in 1691. At a considerably later period, the painter Zoffany came to live here, and here *inter alia* produced his fine picture of Foote in the character of *Major Sturgeon*, in the *Mayor of Garret*, an engraving of which was published by Boydell in 1765. The artistic interest centred in this house was further emphasised by the fact that Richard Wilson, the Father of English Landscape Painting, occupied the rooms here, which had been those of Sir Peter Lely. It is uncertain when he took up his abode here, but he remained till about the year 1771 when he went to reside in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. Wilson used to have in his house an interesting relic of Covent Garden in the shape of a wooden model of a part of the Piazza, the whole measuring about six feet from the floor, including the stand. This the painter utilised as a receptacle for his brushes and paints ; the rustic work of the piers was divided into drawers, and the openings of the arches were filled with pencils and oil bottles. J. T. Smith who gives these details, in his *Nollekens and His Times*, adds that this relic was sold to a broker for about four pounds, when Wilson finally left London and went to live in Wales. One wonders if this interesting toy is still in existence, and if so, whereabouts it is.

After Wilson's departure the premises became the auction rooms of Robins, who was succeeded by Langford, and later by Cox. They were subsequently incorporated in the Tavistock Hotel, and the apartments,

which had been Wilson's and before him Lely's, were used as breakfast rooms. As Cox's Auction Rooms they had been associated with another great artist, for here Hogarth held an exhibition of his *Marriage à la Mode* series ; while Sir Christopher Wren's books were sold here in 1748, just as Horace Walpole's were in 1842.

Nor are these the only traditions connected with what has for long been, and continues to be, the well-known Tavistock Hotel. For that hotel covers more ground than was occupied by the house inhabited by so many notable people ; it includes the site of the coffee-house which Macklin<sup>1</sup> the actor opened in 1754, and only carried on, unsuccessfully, for a year, and about which I have something to say in the chapter on Hart Street, on which it abutted. However, although the actor could not make the place pay, notwithstanding he combined with it what he called a theatre for oratory, where he gave lessons in that art, and also himself presided at the ordinary, adding a shilling Lecture to its attractions, someone else apparently could, for in 1756 it blossomed out as The Great Piazza Coffee House, and it was from one of its windows that Sheridan calmly witnessed the burning of Drury Lane.

When coffee-houses gave place to hotels, the Grand Piazza became The Piazza Hotel where Charles Dickens stayed both in 1844 and 1846, and no doubt remembered the fact when he brought Steerforth here in the twenty-fourth chapter of *David Copperfield*. The hotel was Gothic in design both inside and outside, like, by the way, another hostelry introduced into the same work, notably the original Golden Cross, at Charing Cross. After the house was taken down part of its site was occupied by Floral Hall.

The Tavistock Hotel also has its literary and theatrical memories, among the former as the meeting-place of the club known to readers of *Great Expectations* as The Finches of the Grove ; among the latter as being the scene of one of those practical jokes which Toole and Sothorn concocted with such pains and carried through

<sup>1</sup> Macklin has the great distinction of being mentioned in connection with this venture by Fielding, in his *Voyage to Lisbon*.

with such aplomb and ingenuity. These facts and other interesting data concerning the house were included in a little book, written in 1887, by Mr. C. E. Pascoe, in commemoration of its centenary.

Adjoining the Piazza Coffee House (or as it is now the Tavistock Hotel) was the Shakespeare Tavern, which is said to have been the earliest of such resorts, in Covent Garden. When Covent Garden Theatre was destroyed by fire, the "Shakespeare" was saved by a wall which the proprietors of the play-house had erected to obviate the chance of it being burnt down through any conflagration that might occur at the tavern ! Timbs tells us that Mr. Green, who has left many interesting notes on this area, received various scraps of information about the "Shakespeare," in 1815, from Twigg, who had been employed as cook there. The sign of the house was painted by Samuel Wale, the well-known book illustrator of the period, at a cost of no less than £200 ; and it hung over the roadway in a richly designed iron frame. The "Shakespeare" was at one time run by Dick Milton, a noted gambler, who appears to have lived in a perpetual see-saw of wealth and poverty. Wonderful dinners were served on special occasions at this hostelry, and Twigg grew lyrical in his description of some he had prepared, notably one to Admiral Keppel, on his being appointed First Lord of the Admiralty ; and another, for only three *convives*, which was small but perfect, and cost seven guineas a head.

Another proprietor was one Tomkins who, like Milton, kept his coach, and from being a man of great substance failed for a vast sum, but managed at last to die worth £40,000. Twigg states that Tomkins had never fewer than a hundred pipes of wine in the cellars ; that he employed seven waiters, a cellar-man, and a boy ; that each waiter was well-dressed, with ruffles, etc., and that they thought they had done badly if they did not each make seven pounds a week in tips.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed the "Shakespeare" was famous for the

<sup>1</sup> This "Shakespeare" is not to be confounded with the tavern bearing the same sign in Little Russell Street, which became The Albion in 1828 ; where The Hook and Eye Club held its meetings.



excellence of its fare and its waiting ; and the members of three dining clubs of Indian origin, the Madras, the Bengal, and the Bombay, were accustomed to foregather there, in consequence.

To return to the past private residents in the Piazza, we find that Viscountess Muskerrey, who figures in De Grammont's *Memoirs*, as "The Countess of Babylon," lived in a house at the north-west corner, where James Street enters the square ; and a few years later Sir Godfrey Kneller came to reside here (1681 to 1702), in the north-east corner, not far from the abode of Lely who had died the year before Sir Godfrey's advent. The garden of the latter extended back to that of Dr. Radcliffe who lived in Bow Street, and there is a well-known anecdote concerning a certain door between the two properties. It appears that Kneller's garden was full of rare plants and shrubs, and Radcliffe was anxious to have access to it, and suggested a door being made in the partition wall. To this Kneller, the most obliging of men, readily consented. But Radcliffe's servants began to make their way into the painter's domain, and played havoc with its horticultural contents, so that at last Kneller was obliged to send a message to his neighbour to the effect that he would have to close the door. To this the Doctor, who is described as "often of a cholerick temper," rudely replied "That Sir Godfrey might do what he liked with the door—except paint it." "Did my very good friend, Dr. Radcliffe, say so?" said Kneller to the footman who brought the message. "Then go back, and tell him, with my compliments, that I can take anything from him but his physic."

Here Sir Godfrey lived for some twenty-one years painting those innumerable portraits which gaze down at us from the walls of so many public galleries and private houses. The year in which he left (1702) was a sad one for him, in consequence of an event which was perhaps the cause of his departure, for it was then that his brother John Zachary Kneller, who also lived in the Piazza, died there.

At a rather later date Mr. and Lady Mary Wortley



Montagu were living in the Piazza, and at least one letter from Pope is known to have been addressed to the latter here ; while two announcements in contemporary news-sheets refer to their residence in Covent Garden. Thus in the *Grub Street Journal* for September 17th, 1730, we read that “ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is dangerously ill at her house in the Piazza, Covent Garden ” ; and in *The Morning Advertiser* for the following March 1st, appears this item of news : “ The Lady Wortley Montagu, who has been greatly indisposed at her house in Covent Garden, for some time, is now perfectly recovered, and takes the benefit of the air in Hyde Park every morning by advice of her physicians.”

What the general appearance of the Square was like about this time can be gathered from the pictures of, among others, Hogarth, who knew the neighbourhood intimately, and who appears to have lived for a time in the house of his father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill. This residence was the second house in the Piazza eastward, from James Street, and a proof of Hogarth's presence here, at least in 1732, is provided by an advertisement inserted in the *Daily Journal*, for May 5th of that year, by Cox, the bookseller who speaks of his shop as being “ under the Middle Piazza, near Mr. Hogarth's.”

Other painters who lived in this part of Covent Garden were Prosper Lankrink and John Closterman, who both occupied a house which is now represented by Lockhart's shop. Lankrink died here in 1692, after apparently enjoying life to the full, as well as executing his art in all kinds of directions, landscape, genre, and even ceiling-painting. John Closterman succeeded Lankrink, in the tenancy of this house, and here produced many of the portraits by which he is known and for which he was sometimes put in competition with Kneller. He died here in 1710, and was one of the many artists buried in St. Paul's Church.

At a later time these premises were turned into the once well-known Clunn's Hotel, the resort of Douglas Jerrold, and the meeting-place of “ Our Club,” with which his name is so closely identified. In a little

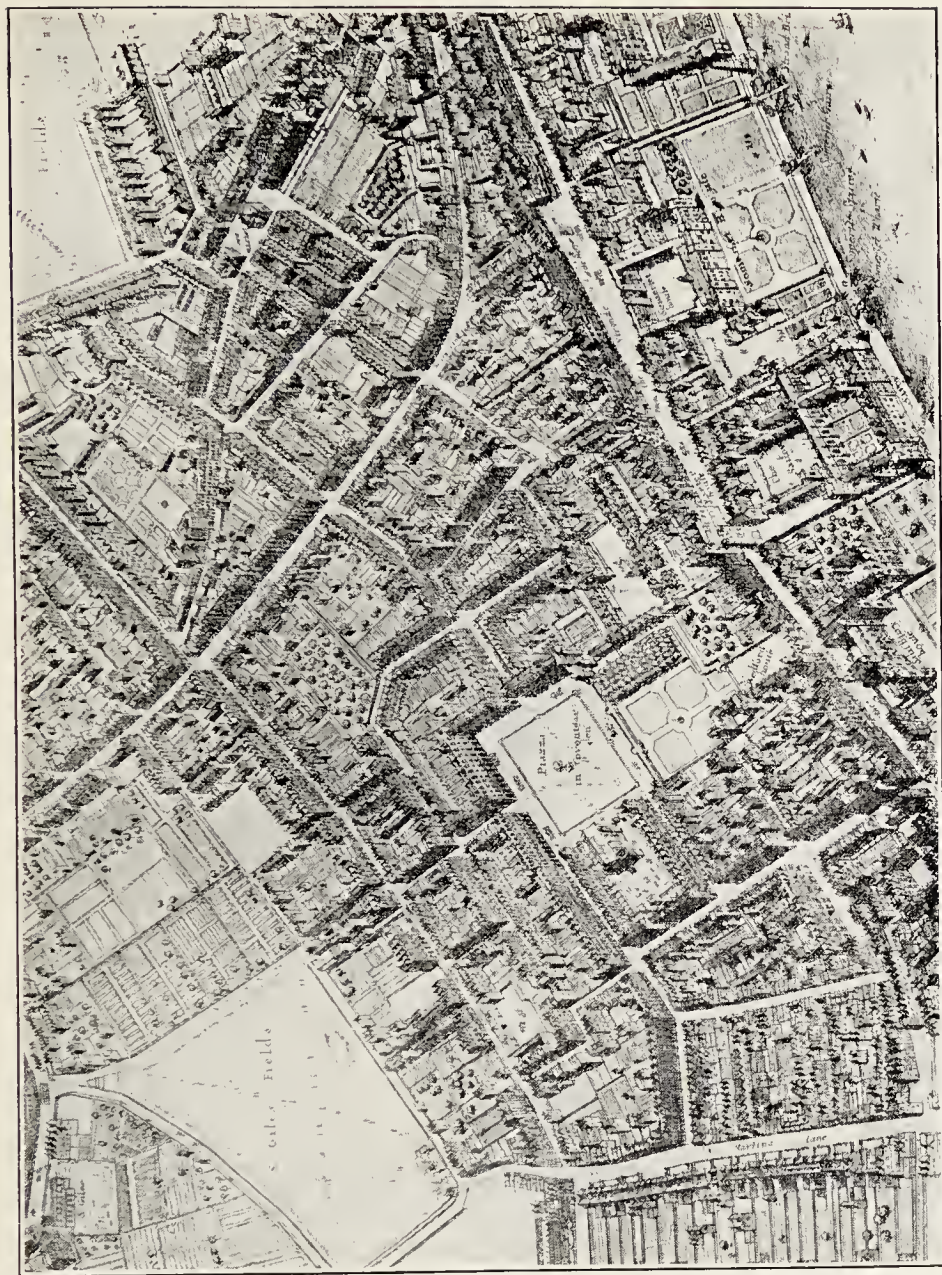
gastronomic manual, entitled *London at Table*, is a reference to this tavern, and we are told that, "To a party made up in a hurry to go to the theatre, nothing can be better than the Piazza Coffee House, or Clunn's Hotel, in Covent Garden ; at the former, the claret is extremely good, while at the latter the port has hitherto been supremely correct." In course of time Clunn's became Richardson's Hotel, whose proprietor purchased the Lion's Head formerly at Button's.

Another even better known hostelry than Clunn's or Richardson's, was the Hummums, which occupied the south-west corner of Russell Street and faced the central square, forming a portion of what was called the Little Piazza. There were two Hummums : the old and the new house. The former was, as its name implies, originally a bagnio, and that it had, like others in this neighbourhood, degenerated from its original intention, is indicated by the following announcement, which appeared in 1701, and was probably inserted by Small, the man who then ran it :<sup>1</sup> "The Hummums in Covent Garden having for several years been neglected and abused by those persons that had the care and management of them, whereby several persons of quality have been disgusted, and have left off coming thither to sweat and bathe as formerly : This is to give notice, that the said Hummums are now in possession of others, who have refitted the same and rectified all those neglects and abuses that were formerly done there, where persons may sweat and bathe in the cleanliest, and be cupped after the newest, manner. There is likewise provided good lodging for any persons who shall desire to lodge there all night, where who pleases may see the same. The price, as was always, for sweating and bathing, is 5/6, for two in one room 8/- : but who lodges there all night 10/-."

Apart from the fact that the old Hummums, which afterwards became an hotel, and lasted till 1865, is connected with various well-known people, Dr. Wolcot (Peter Pindar) frequented it, and Crabbe stayed there

<sup>1</sup> There is a long, too long to quote, description of the procedure at the Hummums in Ned Ward's *London Spy*.





A SECTION OF HOLLAR'S BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF LONDON





when visiting London, as did Tennyson once, in 1844, its name is chiefly associated with the famous story of Parson Ford's ghost which Dr. Johnson, a cousin of Ford's, related to Boswell. Boswell had asked him : " Was there not a story of his ghost having appeared ? " To which Johnson replied, " Sir, it was believed. A waiter at the Hummums, in which house Ford died,<sup>1</sup> had been absent for some time, and returned, not knowing that Ford was dead. Going down to the cellar, according to the story, he met him ; going down again, he met him a second time. When he came up he asked some of the people of the house what Ford could be doing there. They told him Ford was dead. The waiter took a fever, in which he lay for some time. When he recovered, he said he had a message to deliver to some women from Ford ; but he was not to tell what, or to whom. He walked out ; he was followed ; but somewhere about St. Paul's they lost him. He came back, and said he had delivered the message, and the women exclaimed ' Then we are all undone ! ' Dr. Pellet, who was not a credulous man, inquired into the truth of this story, and he said the evidence was irresistible. My wife went to the Hummums (it is a place where people get themselves cupped) ; I believe she went with intention to hear about this story of Ford. At first they were unwilling to tell her ; but, after they had talked to her, she came away satisfied that it was true. To be sure the man had a fever ; and this vision may have been the beginning of it. But if the message to the women, and their behaviour upon it, were true as related, there was something supernatural. That rests upon his word ; and there it remains."

The old Hummums was finally closed in September, 1865, the lease having expired, and the site being required for the extension of Covent Garden Market. The new Hummums was next door, at the corner of Russell Street, and this in time became The Hummums. It was pulled down, and rebuilt, in 1888, from the designs of Messrs. Wylson and Long, architects. Mr.

<sup>1</sup> It is stated in *London Past and Present* that Ford died in the Fleet Prison in 1731. I prefer Johnson's testimony for many reasons.

J. P. Elmslie made a sketch of it when in process of demolition, and this was reproduced in the *London Topographical Record*, 3rd series, for 1900.

Not far from the Hummums, between it and Southampton Street, on the south side of the square was a tavern known as the "Queen's Head." It was kept at one time by the notorious Mother Butler and was the last of those nocturnal resorts for which Covent Garden was famous or infamous. Before her day, however, it was known as Carpenter's Coffee House, and was so named after one Carpenter who, having begun as a Covent Garden porter,<sup>1</sup> eventually rose to be lessee of the market. In the days of the Regency it was one of those places distinguished by the name of *The Finish*, as was another not dissimilar haunt in James Street, whither the bucks and bloods of the period came to end a riotous night, there being no closing time here. It was among the numerous taverns at which Shuter, the actor, had been a pot-boy in his youth; the "Blue Posts," opposite Brydges Street, and the "Sun," in Russell Street, being others at which he was thus employed. "The Finish" is described as being a dirty, disreputable place, down to about the middle of the last century, and Larwood, in his *History of Signboards*, speaks of it as having been cleared away about the year 1866. Drink could be obtained there when the more reputable public-houses were closed. It is said that J. P. Kemble once visited the place while playing *Coriolanus*, and began spouting some lines from the play, but had to make a rapid exit. "The Finish" is linked up with our literature by Tom Moore's allusion to it in his *Memorial to Congress*.

To return once more to the notable past residents in this part of Covent Garden, I can add two ecclesiastics to the list, one being Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne who, in 1726, was lodging with Mr. Smibert, the painter, whose house was situated in the Little Piazza next door to a tavern bearing the sign of the King's Arms. It was, perhaps, at this time that Smibert was induced to

<sup>1</sup> The Covent Garden porters were a recognised institution, and issued their trade cards.

embark on Berkeley's scheme for the erection of a college of science and arts for the instruction of the heathen children of the Bermudas. Smibert set sail for the island but never reached it, and finally settled in Boston where he died in 1751. Had he not been persuaded to identify himself with Berkeley's wild scheme, he might have made a name as a more successful artist than he otherwise proved to be. The other churchman who resided in the Piazza for a time was the Bishop of Bangor ; while such members of the peerage as the Duke of Richmond, the Marquess of Winchester, the Earls of Peterborough and Sussex, and Lords Brownlow, Barkham, Lucas, and Newport, are all found living here at various times during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The last portion of the central square to be considered is that on the south side along which no piazza was formed, but on the spot where once ran the garden wall of Bedford House, fourteen houses had been erected, and christened *Tavistock Row*. One of the residents in this part of the square, was William Godwin, who among the many lodgings he inhabited between 1784 and 1792, in the neighbourhood of the Strand, selected one here, although in which of these years he was in Tavistock Row, is doubtful. Wheatley says he was living here in 1755, but even Godwin with all his cleverness could hardly have resided in a place a year before he was born ! At No. 4 lodged Miss Ray, and it was from here she set out on her fatal walk to Covent Garden Theatre, as we have seen. It was in the upper part of the same house that that remarkable veteran among actors, Charles Macklin, died in 1797. Here on one occasion Charles Mathews the elder, as a youth, called to exhibit his histrionic powers to the old man, who gave him anything but a pleasing welcome. Next door, at No. 3, John Campbell resided during his early days in London, in two rooms for which he paid nine shillings a week, little dreaming of his final apotheosis as Lord Chancellor of England.

Art has been represented in Tavistock Row by at least four men of varying attainments. Of these Willem



Van de Velde, the younger, lived for a time, and died on April 6th, 1707, at No. 5, so he was one of the first to occupy a house in the Row. Later, Christian Frederic Zincke, the famous enamellist and rival of Petitot, and who produced so many portraits of the Walpole family, *inter multos alios*, lived at No. 13, and died in 1767. After him his house was occupied by Nathaniel Dance, the painter, who later became Sir Nathaniel Dance Holland. He was the son of George Dance the architect, and brother of the younger George Dance who succeeded the father in his profession. I may mention, parenthetically, that in a garret in the same house Dr. Wolcot (Peter Pindar) lodged from 1783 to 1805, and here produced many of those satirical poems and epigrams for which he is not particularly favourably known. The bitterness of Godwin and the bitterness of Wolcot were well matched in Tavistock Row. The last artist to be associated with the place was the engraver, Thomas Major, who died here in 1779. It was of him that Walpole wrote, "Major's works after Teniers, etc., will always make a principal figure in a collection of prints, and prevent our envying the excellence of the French in that branch of the art." Major's house was No. 5, that once occupied by Van de Velde, and in it afterwards resided the actor known as "Irish Johnstone."

One cannot leave the Piazzas without saying a word about the central market as it has been in our own time, although this book only professes to record the past annals of Covent Garden. The central structure, more or less as it is to-day, is just a century old, having been erected by the 6th Duke of Bedford in 1829-30. Having obtained an Act for the reconstruction of the place, he had all the old stalls and sheds and their appurtenances cleared away, and erected the present quasi-classic building from the designs of Mr. Charles Fowler, the architect of Hungerford Market.

Since then all the chief fruiterers and florists have had shops in the place. There used to be a department upstairs where one could buy cactus plants (those diminutive ones in little red pots) and, if I remember aright, live things like newts and lizards, frogs, and toads ; and



if, for a moment, I may be allowed to be autobiographical, I like to recall one of the joys of my boyhood, which was to go there and purchase such delights.

There has always been a lot said about the dirty state of Covent Garden Market. Why, I fail to see. You cannot possibly have vegetables and flowers without having refuse too. *Punch*, which so much enjoys itself when these opportunities occur, and from its point of view rightly, since they give it a sometimes much-needed (it was specially so in the past) material for jest, was in great form, during the 'eighties, over what is called Mud Salad Market, and once appeared with a plan of the place humorously "tricked" out with all sorts of amusing and fictitious street-names.

I do not think Covent Garden was ever any worse than, say, Les Halles, at Paris ; but give a dog, even a Covent Garden dog, a bad name and—it sticks. Since those days much has happened here, in the way of improvement. At one time, too, one hardly expected to open a newspaper without learning that some new and rich person (sometimes of quite unrecognised identity) had bought Covent Garden. For years I was under the impression that it belonged to the Duke of Bedford ; then followed a period when I supposed that it appertained to Mr. Malleby-Deeley ; followed a phase when the Beecham Estate Trust seemed to own it.

I do not think it much matters, however, who is its proprietor. The fact is that its annals are so varied, its memories so rich, its association with the illustrious as well as with the notorious, so marked, that it is in itself a living historical monument, with three centuries behind it filled with all kinds of notable and romantic happenings. Nor is it alone in this wealth of associations : every street that surrounds it is equally full of the ghosts of other days who picking their way amid the cabbage stalks and orange peel, may have some consolation in their return to this sublunary sphere, by inhaling (if ghosts can inhale) the scents of a thousand flowers.

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIAL LIFE OF THE AREA

#### MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

**I**T is a curious fact that although Covent Garden was in the seventeenth century a fashionable area, and, as the old topographers were fond of phrasing it, "well inhabited," yet it enjoyed anything but a savoury reputation so far as morals are concerned. That in this respect it went from bad to worse when the eighteenth century was in full swing, is a fact ; but even in the earlier days, those when Dryden and Wycherley were producing their plays, and Mr. Pepys was noting the manners and customs of a changed and changing population amid a rebuilt and rebuilding environment, the broadest-minded person could hardly have put in a plea for the place on the score of strict morality. The references to it in contemporary literature, prose, poetical and dramatic, are frequent, but if they recall for us no little of the air of fashion which pervaded it, they are chiefly concerned with it as a place for assignations, as a home for the loose-liver, and for the irresponsible and not infrequently disorderly conduct of those who visited it. For instance, Wycherley, in *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1673), makes one of the characters exclaim : "Come, come, do not blaspheme this masquerading age, like an ill-bred city-dame whose husband is half-broke by living in Covent Garden" ; while Congreve, in *Love for Love* (1695), puts these words into the mouth of Mrs. Foresight who has been twitted for going to Covent Garden alone with a man : "A great piece of business to go to Covent Garden in a hackney coach, and take a turn with one's friend !" adding, a little later, in the same scene : "If

I had gone to Knightsbridge, or to Chelsea, or to Spring Gardens, or to Barn Elms with a man alone—something might be said.”

But it must not be supposed that Covent Garden was wholly given over to such things, for even when Mr. Pepys records going to a tavern there, it was for an artistic purpose, as thus on May 9th, 1662 : “ With Mr. Salisbury into Covent Garden, to an alehouse, to see a picture that hangs there, which is offered for 20s., and I offered fourteen, but it is worth much more money, but did not buy it. Thence to see an Italian puppet play, that is within the rayles there—the best that ever I saw, and great resort of gallants ” ; by which last phrase one learns that the central open space in the Piazza was apparently free for the setting up of those shows (like, but on a more elaborate scale, our Punch and Judy) which then attracted all classes. Five years later we find the Diarist going with Mrs. Pepys to dine in Covent Garden : “ My wife and I bethought ourselves to go to a French house to dinner, and so enquired out Monsieur Robins, my perriwigg-maker, who keeps an ordinary, and in an ugly street in Covent Garden, did find him at the door, and so we in ; and in a moment almost had the table covered, and clean glasses, and all in the French manner, and a mess of pottage first, and then a piece of bœuf-à-la-mode, all exceeding well seasoned, and to our great liking ; at least it would have been anywhere else but in this bad street, and in a perriwigg-maker’s house ; but to see the pleasant and ready attendance that we had and all things so desirous to please, and ingenious in the people, did take me mightily. Our dinner cost us 6s.”

On the other hand Pepys indicates something of the less respectable character of the neighbourhood, when he tells how, among other extravagances, Lord Brouncker has a mistress “ that he keeps in Covent Garden.” The Diarist knew, too, the Rose Tavern in Bow Street, which had anything but a savoury reputation, although one of his recorded visits there, when he dined off half a breast of mutton, alone, during the interval of a play at the King’s Theatre, was innocent enough.



I shall have occasion to refer to the "Rose" later on.

From the same authority we gain some information as to certain of the residents in Covent Garden. For instance, in January 1666, we find him coming, as he frequently did at other times, to Lord Brouncker's house in the Piazza, one of the largest mansions in what was at that period the best residential part of London. On this occasion he arrived with his host in a coach and four, and "Lord," he exclaims, "what staring to see a nobleman's coach come to town! And porters everywhere bow to us; and such begging of beggars!" But there was a fly in this ointment, for the Diarist, pleased that the city has begun to fill up again, after the Plague, yet has to bemoan the empty state of Covent Garden and Westminster, "no Court or gentry being there."

Later in the same month he visits Mrs. Pierce, at "her new house in Covent Garden, a very fine place and fine house"; and in the following September, on his way home by coach, he calls at Bennet's, "our late mercer, who is come into Covent Garden to a fine house, looking down upon the Exchange"; and, he adds, "I perceive many Londoners every day come." He takes occasion after making this entry to note that "Mr. Pierce hath let his wife's closet and the little blind bed-chamber, and a garret, to a silk-man for £50 fine, and £30 per annum"; which indicates the high rents then obtainable here.

Ned Ward, in his *London Spy*, which first appeared in 1698, hints at the other side of Covent Garden's dual life. He and a friend, he tells us, proceeded from the New Exchange, in the Strand, to Covent Garden, "where we overtook abundance of religious lady-birds, armed against the assaults of Satan with Bible and Common Prayer Book, marching with all good speed to Covent Garden Church. . . . 'These,' says my friend, 'are a pious sort of creature that are much given to go to church . . . and if you were to walk the other way, you might meet as many young gentlemen from the Temple and Gray's Inn, going to join with them in their devotions.' " The two then proceed to St. Paul's Church,



and the friend, on emerging, remarks : " This market and that church hide more faults of kind wives and daughters among the neighbouring inhabitants than any pretended visits either to my cousin at t'other end of the town, or some other distant acquaintance. For if the husband asks, ' Where have you been, wife ? ' or the parent, ' Where have you been, daughter ? ' the answer, if it be after eleven in the forenoon, or between three and four in the afternoon, is ' At Prayers.' But if early in the morning, then their excuse is, ' I took a walk in Covent Garden market, not being very well, to refresh myself with the scent of herbs and flowers.' Bringing a flower or a sprig of sweet briar home in her hand suffices to confirm the matter."

There is little doubt that the presence of the market where assignations could be kept, without creating undue remark, helped much to give Covent Garden an indifferent reputation. For as Ward remarks, although there were " a parcel of jolly-red-faced dames, in blue aprons and straw hats selling their garden ware. . . they stunk so of brandy, strong drink and tobacco, that the former o'ercame the fragrancy that arose from their sweet herbs and flowers." The fact, too, that it was here that the Bagnios, or as we should call them, Turkish Baths were in some instances used for purposes not contemplated by their inaugurators, helped to emphasise this atmosphere of licentiousness. There were several of these establishments in Covent Garden, and about them I shall have something to say later on ; but I may here note that their introduction into this country, in the reign of Charles II, was largely owing to the enterprise of Sir William Jennings, who, as a return for services rendered to the King, obtained a patent for establishing all the Bagnios or Baths in the metropolis.

I have already incidentally referred to the use made of the central portion of the Piazza for shows, and another instance is recorded by Malcolm in his *Londinium Redivivum*, where he tells how " a quack who exhibited upon a stage in Covent Garden (in 1682), amused his spectators by taking thirteen grains of some poisonous drug. The German operator, as he was

termed, performed this experiment under the inspection of several surgeons and physicians ; and retiring, contrived, by means best known to himself, to evacuate it, or prevent any visible ill-effects from a dose that would have killed twenty men."

To discard strict chronology for a moment, I may note that this amazing medical gentleman was but a pioneer of the quack element in Covent Garden, for during the latter years of the eighteenth century, a certain Dr. Bossy, who according to Angelo, who gives some details about him in his *Reminiscences*, was a German, used to appear here in court suit and ruffles, and erected a stage up to which patients walked by a broad step ladder. It appears that his real name was Garcia, and that he was really a Spaniard as was his successor as an itinerant medico here, Dr. Lyon. Hosmer Shepherd made a drawing (it is in the Crace collection) of the doctor at work in Covent Garden ; but in this picture no platform appears. The church is shown on the right, and part of the central market on the left, with Tavistock Row in the background.

Another practitioner of the same kind was a Dr. Rock, who used to arrive in his carriage and thence dispense advice and nostrums. J. Maurer produced a print, dated 1741, showing the quack, with a perspective view of Covent Garden as a background.

In this connection it is interesting to remember that at one time men and women, known as Simplers, who collected medicinal herbs in the then rural outskirts of the city, used to sit in the market-place selling them, the women notable for wearing a number of brass rings on their fingers. They not only disposed of their wares in this way, but supplied the neighbouring chemists with medicinal herbs and suchlike things. One of the latter was a certain William Blackwell, whose shop bore the sign of *Ye Buckthorn Tree*, and whose trade-card informs all whom it may concern that he "sells all sorts of Physical Herbs, roots, flowers and seeds, green and dried buckthorn, elderburys and juice, leeches and vipers, wholesale and retail."

But the central square was not alone given up to

itinerant shows. Here it was that the London apprentices of the neighbourhood were wont to disport their agility in football and suchlike pastimes, and to this Gay refers in a passage in his *Trivia* :

“ Where Covent Garden’s famous temple stands,  
That boasts the work of Jones’ immortal hands,  
Columns with plain magnificence appear,  
And graceful porches lead along the square ;  
Here oft my course I bend, when lo ! from far  
I spy the furies of the foot-ball war :  
The ’prentice quits his shop to join the crew,  
Increasing crowds the flying game pursue,  
O whither shall I run ? the throng draws nigh ;  
The ball now skims the street, now soars on high ;  
The dexterous glazier strong returns the bound,  
And jingling sashes on the pent-house sound.”

Besides such uses as this, Covent Garden with its large open space was found suitable for various kinds of public exhibitions of excitement or discontent, and booths were set up here for the voting at the Westminster elections. At that which took place in 1750, Walpole tells us “ that Col. Waldegrave, being mistaken for Mr. Leveson, was pelted all the way from Covent Garden to the Park ” ; and on the occasion of the 1774 election, he records how the Duchess of Northumberland (*née* Lady Elizabeth Seymour) carried everything against the then powerful Wilkes faction and their candidates, “ sitting daily in the midst of Covent Garden ” for that purpose.

At a later date, 1782, C. P. Moritz, the German traveller, describes an election held here, and gives a word-picture of the scene with the hustings set up in front of the portico of St. Paul’s Church, as Rowlandson and Pugin picture it for us in their well-known illustrations to Ackermann’s *Microcosm of London*.

Walpole had previously (on November 23rd, 1741) informed his friend Mann of another incident in the Garden’s annals : “ Vernon’s birthday,” he writes, “ passed quietly, but it was not designed to be pacific ; for at twelve at night eight gentlemen, dressed like sailors, and masked, went round Covent Garden, with a drum beating up for a volunteer mob ; but it did not



take ; and they retired to a great supper that was prepared for them at the Bedford Head, and ordered by Whitehead the author of *Manners*."

Walpole does not specify who these eight would-be disturbers of what peace reigned in Covent Garden at that hour were, but as Whitehead is named as the arranger of the feast, this being Paul Whitehead who is known as a minor poet and came under Churchill's lash,<sup>1</sup> and was also one of the prominent members of the Hell-Fire Club, it seems fairly certain that the chief of that fraternity, Sir Francis Dashwood, and some of his brethren were the protagonists of what proved to be a fiasco. Vernon was, of course, the famous admiral who took Porto Bello in 1739, and who (as innumerable public-house signs testify) was a very popular character at the time. He was, however, repulsed in an attack on Carthagenia in 1741, and five years later was struck off the roll of admirals for publishing two pamphlets directed against the administration of the Admiralty.<sup>2</sup>

But it was not only political excitement which crowded Covent Garden with visitors and vehicles, for J. T. Smith records Mrs. Carter as once remarking that she recollected, "when Garrick acted, hackney chairs were then so numerous that they stood all round the Piazzas, down Southampton Street, and extended more than half-way along Maiden Lane."

One might have expected that Gay's *Trivia* would have contained some further references to Covent Garden and its gay doings, but the author restricts himself merely to a recommendation of its more material fruits, just as he specifies Leadenhall for beef and St. James's Market for veal, Moorfields for old books, and Monmouth Street for old clothes.

<sup>1</sup> May I (can worse disgrace on Manhood fall?)  
Be born a Whitehead and baptized a Paul!"

<sup>2</sup> By the way, in a letter to Henry Fox (1746), Walpole refers to what he calls "Covent Garden Editions," apropos of some verses he sends his friend. In them is a description of Flora, and Walpole in this connection mentions a certain Fanny Murray, who was a woman of the town, afterwards married to David Ross, the actor, so that Covent Garden editions may be a mere topical reference to the place's dual connection,



But the appearance and character of the place in the early morning hours can be gauged from Hogarth's famous print (in many copies of which Lord Archer's house, later to become the famous Evans's, is shown on the wrong side of the church) in his series of the *Four Times of Day*. Here we see the booths and stalls littered about the spot where the stone-built market is to-day. We see, too, the gallants and their *inamorata* (the latter showing little coyness), the beggars, the scandalised lady going to early service with her page carrying her prayer-book. It is a wintry morning, the time five minutes to seven by St. Paul's clock, and in front of the church Tom King's Coffee House is crowded by a number of people who are having a free fight, with staves flourished in the air, and a rapt wig flying through the door.

Tom King's was a notorious, perhaps the most notorious, centre in this part of the town. "What rake is ignorant of King's Coffee House?" asks Fielding in the prologue to his *Covent Garden Journal*. Tom King from his early upbringing might have been expected to do better than keep a disorderly night haunt, for he was among the boys elected from Eton to King's College, Cambridge, and Harwood gives this concise account of him: "A.D. 1713, Thomas King, born at West Ashton in Wiltshire, went away scholar in apprehension that his fellowship would be denied him; and afterwards kept that coffee house in Covent Garden, which was called by his own name."

This would seem to indicate that he had already done something reprehensible at Eton; and at the same time his having been there may partly account for the presence of many of the "quality" at his shanty, for it was at first little more, in the centre of the Garden.

After Tom King's death, Molly or Mary King succeeded him here, and carried on the place in an even less orderly way, if possible, than it had been conducted before.

By this time Covent Garden as a residential area had been practically deserted by the fashion, which had gone to the newer, more select, purlieus of Grosvenor and Cavendish and Hanover Squares, and it was nearly

wholly given over to people like the notorious Mother Douglas and Moll King herself, and became for a time as notorious a centre of such traffic as Lewknor's Lane or Whetstone Park.

Some of the so-called coffee houses were frankly brothels kept by women who had a regular *clientèle*; others were taverns whose upstairs rooms were used for the same purpose, although their ground floors were apparently innocent of anything except drunkenness; while, as I have before hinted, the Bagnios or Baths formed a third series of places for prostitution, many of which were to be found in the neighbouring thoroughfares and by-ways. But King's was a feature of the Piazza itself. Concerning it and its doings, a rare little work appeared in 1738 under the title of "Tom K(ing)s: or the Paphian Grove. With the various Humours of Covent Garden, The Theatre, The Gaming Table, etc. A Mock Heroic Poem. In Three Cantos. To which is added, A Dedication to Mrs. K—g, and the Author's Apology to such Gentlemen as think themselves personally reflected on in this Poem." There is an emblematic frontispiece containing the anonymous author's portrait, and two plates depicting night-scenes in Covent Garden. A portrait of Moll King is extant, and the curious may find in contemporary news-sheets details of her conviction for keeping a disorderly house, and other cognate matters.

One such reference occurs in *The Weekly Miscellany* for June 9th, 1739, where we read that "Monday, Mrs. Mary King, of Covent Garden, was brought up to the King's Bar at Westminster, and received the following sentence, for keeping a disorderly house, viz.—to pay a fine of £200, to suffer three months' imprisonment, to find security for her good behaviour for three years, and to remain in prison till the fine be paid."

In a short article on Moll King<sup>1</sup> in Caulfield's *Remarkable Characters*, where by the way her so-called portrait is given (it seems really to be that of Dolly, of the Chop

<sup>1</sup> Laroon executed a picture of the interior of Moll King's, once at Strawberry Hill, and there is a rare print of the place in which Mr. Apreece appears.

House), the writer speaks (in 1820) thus of this aspect of Covent Garden as he visualised it in retrospect :

“Covent Garden has been particularised for more than a century past as the scene of midnight riot and debauchery, and it is only within the last twenty years that it has been rendered tolerably decent, as the front windows of the bagnios under the Piazza were filled from seven at night until four or five o’clock in the morning, with courtesans of every description, who, in the most impudent manner, invited the passengers from the theatres into houses where they were accomodated with suppers and lodging, and frequently at the risk of all they possessed.”

Horace Walpole, who by the way calls the place the Garden, by which shortened title it was frequently known in those days, tells Mann, in 1742, of an incident here which occurred to three of their friends, as thus : “Constables broke into a bagnio in Covent Garden, and took up Jack Spencer, Mr. Stewart, and Lord George Graham, and would have thrust them into the Round House with the poor women, if they had not been worth more than eighteenpence.”

At Moll King’s, we are told, “might be found the bucks, bloods, demireps, and choice spirits of London, associated with the most elegant and fascinating Cyprians, congregated with every species of human kind that intemperance, idleness, necessity, or curiosity, could assemble together,” when “the eminent, the eccentric, and the notorious in every walk of life, were to be found nightly indulging their festivities within its famous precincts.” “Noblemen and the first *beaux*,” adds another writer, “after leaving Court would go to Moll King’s in full dress, with swords and bags, and in rich brocaded silk coats, and walked and conversed with persons of every description. She would serve chimney-sweepers, gardeners, and the market-people in common with her lords of the highest rank. Mr. Apreece, a tall thin man in rich dress, was her constant customer.”

After retiring from an apparently lucrative business, Moll King went to live at Hampstead, where she had a pew in the church, and where she died in 1747.



Among the more notorious taverns was the "Rose" in Russell Street and Brydges Street. It had, says one authority, "a bad name as the resort of the worst characters of the town, both male and female, who made it the headquarters of midnight orgies and drunken broils where murderous assaults were frequently occurring among the bullies of the time. It stood pre-eminent among the dangerous houses of the neighbourhood." This reputation it possessed even during the seventeenth century, as references to it in this capacity, in the plays of contemporary dramatists, prove. Hogarth, who knew every inch of this neighbourhood like his own hand, is supposed to introduce its interior into Plate III of his *Rake's Progress*; and there is little doubt that not a few of the less respectable figures in his prints were more or less portraits of men and women who were well known to habitués of these resorts.

But although many of these taverns thus gave themselves over to unbridled licence at night-time, during the day they generally wore an appearance demure enough to satisfy the most squeamish. The Bedford Arms Tavern, frequented by Hogarth and his friends, and where indeed the famous *Five Days' Peregrination* was planned, was perhaps respectable even during the small hours. The Bedford Coffee House was also a place at which no accusation in this respect has been levelled, and even the "Rose" during the day-time was sedate enough to satisfy Gibbon, who, on one occasion at least (January 19th, 1763), dined there with his father before going to see Mallet's *Elvira* performed at the neighbouring theatre.

Of these taverns I shall have more to say when we come to them in the various streets in which they were situated, and I need not therefore enlarge on their annals and characters more precisely here; but I may remind the reader that at one of them, in Bow Street, the knives and forks were chained to the tables; and that at another, a notice read: "Here you may get drunk for a penny, dead drunk for twopence, and get straw for nothing."

The Bagnios, to which I have already alluded, were





*After a print by Sutton Nicholls, dated 1723*

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PIAZZA AND MARKET, COVENT GARDEN



of two kinds. There were, for instance, those known as the Duke's, later christened the King's, and later still the Queen's, and the Royal. These there is no cause to suspect were otherwise than quite legitimately carried on and were utilised only for the purpose for which they had been instituted. But many lesser ones arose, which, under this official *imprimatur*, were but convenient meeting-places for the immoral, and they became as notorious as the taverns which congregated in such profusion in this neighbourhood. The fact is the name was a cloak, and that this was so is proved by the fact that not a few of the disorderly houses<sup>1</sup> hereabouts gave themselves this title. The notorious Mother Douglas's, near Tom King's, in the Piazza, was so called ; so was that of a certain Mrs. Gould, which was renowned for the elegance of its appointments ; while Mrs. Stanhope, known as " Hell Fire Stanhope," because she had been the mistress of Sir Francis Dashwood, the moving spirit of the well-known " Hell Fire " fraternity, also kept a house under this name. Mother Douglas's headquarters were in the Piazza itself, and that Hogarth knew all about her is shown by the fact that she appears in some of his prints, notably in *Enthusiasm Displayed*, where she is said to be the convulsed woman in the foreground, although in the artist's revised version of the print, Mary Tofts, the Rabbit Woman of Godalming, is substituted. Mother Douglas is also introduced into Plate XI of the *Industry and Idleness* series, as well as in *The March to Finchley*. Nor was pictorial art alone in perpetuating her, for Foote brought her on to the stage as Mrs. Cole in *The Mirror*, and Joseph Reid introduced her into *The Register Office* under the appropriate name of Mrs. Snarewell. It seems probable that the Mrs. Cole of Cleland's *Memoirs of Fanny Hill* was intended to feature (as the films have taught us to call it) the same lady who, by the way, turned *dévôte* in her declining years after having made a fortune in Covent Garden by trafficking in her own and other women's dishonour.

This part of the town was in truth, during the

<sup>1</sup> They appear to have been indicated by a bunch of grapes hanging at the door.



eighteenth century, or at least the better—or shall we say the worser—part of it, infested by procuresses and bullies, and if during the day-time it preserved a quasi-decent appearance, after nightfall it was at once a danger and an allurements to the gay sparks of the town, as well as a trap for the unwary country gentleman or farmer up to London for ostensibly quite other reasons.

In this connection, the remarks made by Shenstone in a letter to a friend are significant : “ London,” he writes, “ is really dangerous at this time ; the pick-pockets, formerly content with mere pilfering, make no scruple to knock people down . . . but in the Piazzas, Covent Garden, they come in large bodies armed with cousteaus, and attack whole parties, so that the danger of coming out of the playhouses is of some weight in the opposite scale when I am disposed to go to them oftener than I ought.” The presence here of many gambling hells no doubt had no little to do with bringing to this part such as hoped to waylay the winners and ease them of their gains. For long the gaming houses had been a trouble to the authorities and a presentment to the Grand Jury against them is dated 1744 ; while on January 13th, 1721, the *London Mercury* states that there were then no fewer than twenty-two such haunts in this relatively restricted area alone.

With the gradual migration of citizens westward other centres gradually formed themselves, and Soho and its neighbourhood, where the White House, in the square, and Mrs. Goadby’s, in Berwick Street, were for long notorious, took its place ; just as Park Place, St. James’s Street, with Mother Needham’s presence sullyng it, and Bloomsbury with its Mrs. Theresa Berkeley, and even the almost then wilds of Chelsea (Mrs. Potter in Albion Terrace was among other of the sisterhood here), were at various times well known to those who were frequenters or to such as studied the little guides which gave the names and addresses of such people to the hitherto uninitiated.

From time to time, too, quaint characters were to be found about the Covent Garden area, such as are found



identified with various parts of London. There was, for instance, that William Cussans, or Curzons, who once hired himself out as a pot-boy, to John (or Paddy) Moore, the proprietor of the Red Lion Tavern, a place frequented by George, Prince of Wales. Cussans was, it is said, never known to smile. J. T. Smith has preserved some anecdotes about him in the biographical section of his *Nollekens and His Times*. He is supposed to have been an illegitimate son of the Earl of Scarborough. Some of the prints which have Covent Garden as a background, reveal other habitués of a curious or eccentric character, such as that by Gravelot (1742), representing Owen Farrel, the Irish Dwarf; or the later print, dated 1800, portraying the Yorkshire Irishman, as he is called, with a view of the Piazza as a background. These things help us to visualise and build up in our minds a picture of the place and its frequenters, and now that so much of London is disappearing, are among the few things that enable us to do so.

Written testimony does much, of course, and incidentally we learn something of this particular area from a rare poem entitled *A Walk from St. James's to Covent Garden, the Back way, Through the Meuse: in Imitation of Mr. Gay's Journey to Exeter, in a Letter to a Friend*; which anonymous publication was issued by James Roberts, in 1717.<sup>1</sup>

As the wanderer approaches Covent Garden he is interrupted in his observations by a characteristic scene:

“For as to Covent Garden I drew near  
Two fighting Females in a Mob appear;  
A Hand of Carots was the Prize, which both  
Claim'd as their own Propriety, by Oath.”

We have another picture of Covent Garden in Hogarth's supposititious print entitled *Rich's Glory*, showing the great manager entering his new theatre there in

<sup>1</sup> It is preserved in the Harvard Library, and is made known to us by Mr. W. H. Irving, in his delightful and profound work, *John Gay's London*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1928.

a triumph ; an incident which occurred in 1732, and evoked the lines :

“ Not with more glory through the streets of Rome,  
Return'd great conquerors in triumph home,  
Than, proudly drawn with Beauty by his side,  
We see gay R(ich) in gilded chariot ride.”

This print, whether it be by Hogarth or not, which is a question, is interesting in that it gives us a view of the Piazza, looking west towards the church, from a point in Russell Street, and shows us the kind of sheds which were used for the market before that institution invaded the centre of the square, after Bedford House had been demolished in 1704, and when houses had been erected on the site of its garden.

With the later years of the eighteenth century and those of the Regency we find a gradual change coming over the place. Fashion has entirely deserted it ; even some of the proprietors and proprietresses of houses which made it notorious had migrated westward, and such disturbances as occurred were caused by the incursions of the Tom and Jerry type, who used to end up a riotous evening by seeing life in the taverns which were still to be found here ; in overturning Charleys in their boxes ; or in drinking coffee at stalls in company with carters and farmers who had brought their vegetables and floral produce from the outskirts for sale at the Market.

In such books as *Life in London* and *The English Spy*, you can gain a fair, if rather exaggerated, idea of what the place and its frequenters were like at the time when George IV was King. Pierce Egan and Bernard Blackmantle, with the aid of the two Cruikshanks, have left us vivid pictures of the life of the Metropolis as such as Corinthian Tom and Jerry Hawthorn and Bob Logic, bent on sampling it in all its manifestations, may be supposed to have found it. The very wordy and in parts complex text adorned with an allusiveness that makes innumerable foot-notes indispensable, is, I think, a stumbling-block to many, as it certainly is to me, but,

as Thackery once exclaimed in his *Roundabout* paper, *De Juventute*, "But the pictures!—oh!—the pictures are noble still." Noble is hardly, perhaps, the epithet most suitable to these highly coloured, often vulgar, illustrations; but they certainly do give us a panorama of that full-blooded life, before we had begun to "find" ourselves, and introspection was not a word generally applied to human speculation. Some of these pictures have for us here a special interest. There is, for instance, Tom and Jerry in the Saloon at Covent Garden Theatre; then immediately after comes one showing the interior of a tavern with the friends taking Blue Ruin, followed by a visit to a coffee house "near the Olympic," and a not-altogether-to-be-unexpected appearance at Bow Street Police Court. The Green Room at Drury Lane is also here to illustrate Egan's text, and a scene "at the Finish<sup>1</sup> near Covent Garden" accompanying that of Blackmantle. The latter with one entitled "The Hell of Infamy, Alias the Oyster Saloon in Bridges Street, or New Covent Garden Hell," seems to give a more or less modern point to Dryden's rather unsavoury epilogue to his *King Arthur*, produced in 1685, wherein he asserts that "our Brydges Street is grown a Strumpet Fair."

But the time was approaching when the whole character of Covent Garden was to undergo a drastic change. As we have seen, the market hitherto existing here, if sufficient for the vegetarian and floral needs of a then relatively restricted city, was quite inadequate to cope with the requirements of a vastly increased and increasing population. The booths and stalls of which it consisted were, too, but rude and often ramshackle affairs. True

<sup>1</sup> A note in the *English Spy* (1825) to this passage reads thus:

"Mother Butler, the queen of Covent Garden, for many years kept the celebrated *Finish*, where, if shut out of your lodging, you might take shelter till morning, very often in the *very best* of company. The house has, since she left it, been shut up through the suspension of its licence. Mother Butler was a witty, generous-hearted, and very extraordinary woman. She is, I believe, still living, and in good circumstances."

"The Finish" succeeded Moll King's tenancy in the Covent Garden house.



that "the small grotto of trees," mentioned by Strype and portrayed by Hollar, must still have been, as the former authority states, "most pleasant in the summer season," and there is no doubt that the market was "much resorted to" on account of the undoubted excellence of the wares exposed for sale. But that was at a time when retail shops were not so plentiful, and people came here to purchase what at a later date they found it more convenient, if more expensive, to buy in stores (as our American friends have taught us to call them) nearer home. Covent Garden as a market now began to take on that wholesale character with which we to-day chiefly associate its name. This being so, a more permanent and convenient centre was obviously a crying need, and the then Duke of Bedford (the eighth holder of the title), who came of age in that year, caused the present market buildings to be erected in 1830, from the designs of his architect, Mr. Charles Fowler, at a cost of some £50,000, a structure which has since undergone various successive alterations.

With the covering of the central square by this erection, the abolition of the old stalls and sheds, and the various improvements in the way of lighting and paving, etc., which took place, Covent Garden may be said to have entered on an entirely new phase of existence. Reputable firms leased shops there, and disreputable inhabitants of the surrounding houses betook themselves elsewhere. The Victorian era began, and with it a decency, at least in the outward manifestation of civic life, which had been badly to seek under earlier rulers. If people went, as they did continue to go, to Covent Garden at unearthly hours, it was to see the market carts come in laden with flowers and vegetables, and it was the fashion, one not wholly yet gone out, for the bright young people (some of quite mature age, too) to end up the early mornings after a ball, by coming hither in hansoms (or taxis now) and watching those who had often had an equal absence of sleep undoing "their corded bales," and making gay with their contents an otherwise drab and melancholy environment. It is one of those curious fads of which the more sedate among



us fail to see the attraction ; but that there is one in, I suppose, doing something rather out of the ordinary, was proved for many a year, and, as I have said, still, I believe, obtains. To drink coffee at a stall in company with carters and porters after imbibing champagne cup in a more select *milieu* is no doubt one of those experiences in contrast to which human nature seems proverbially prone.

But if among these adventurers there be any who recall the past and who can see in their mind's eye the days long since vanished and the figures who are now "cold, cold as those who lived and loved a thousand years ago," then, at least, they can people this spot with a curious and heterogeneous crowd : can see Mr. Pepys going into the "Rose" and Mr. Dryden coming out of Wills's ; solemn Mr. Evelyn entering his lodging in Russell Street, and equally solemn Mr. Southerne going to early prayers in St. Paul's Church ; may catch a glimpse of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the Piazza, and may hear the drums and noise of Sir Francis Dashwood and his monkish crew. Or they may note Mr. Gray, trudging down every day from his rooms in Southampton Row to buy in the Garden the flowers he loved, "sweet peas and pinks and scarlet Martagon lilies, double stocks and flourishing marjoram" ; or "Peter Pindar" thinking out some bitter epigram as he passes through the Piazza on his way from his dwelling in Tavistock Row. Or better still may see Charles Lamb loitering about the precincts of a place "dearer to him than any gardens of Alcinoüs," or Douglas Jerrold's brilliant eyes lighting up at the thought of one of those witty (and bitter) retorts to be fired off at the "Hook and Eye," at the "Albion," or at "Our Club" at Clunn's.

What a crowd of famous, and among them some infamous, ones swims into our ken as our mind runs over the manifold associations of this haunted spot. From the monks attending to their orchard in the days before King Henry came and dispossessed them, to those in which Dickens and Thackeray knew and described it, and peopled it with figures more living than so many

of those who actually trod its stones : Ruth and Tom Pinch “ snuffing up the perfume of the fruits and flowers, and wondering at the magnificence of the pineapples and melons ” ; David Copperfield sad and solitary in lodgings here, after Dora’s death, and the Uncommercial Traveller noting the manners and customs of the place from his adjacent rooms ; George Warrington entertaining his friends at the “ Bedford Head,” before going on to the play-house to see *Carpezan* performed ; Bayham taking his “ modest cup of coffee ” in the Market, and Major Pendennis giving a dinner to Foker and Pen at the Covent Garden Coffee House.

We get, I think, in such a retrospect something of the conception of the place as entered the mind of Little Dorrit before she visited Clennam’s lodging there :

“ Courtly ideas of Covent Garden as a place with famous coffee-houses, where gentlemen wearing gold-laced coats and swords had quarrelled and fought duels ; costly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there were flowers in winter at guineas-a-piece, pineapples at guineas-a-pound, and peas at guineas-a-pint ; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there was a mighty theatre, showing wonderful and beautiful sights to richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen ; desolate ideas of Covent Garden, as having all those arches in it, where the miserable children in rags among whom she had just now passed, like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on offal, huddled together for warmth, and were hunted about ; teeming ideas of Covent Garden, as a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street-gutters, all confused together.”

## CHAPTER IV

### ST. MARTIN'S LANE AND STREETS ON THE WEST

I HAVE before stated that the boundaries of the district dealt with in this book are represented by St. Martin's Lane, Long Acre, Drury Lane, and the Strand. Before considering the thoroughfares and by-ways which intersect this area, something must, therefore, be said about these important containing streets, as they may be called, so far as they are within our present purview. Thus with regard to St. Martin's Lane, that portion of it extending from King William Street north to Long Acre need alone be considered; Long Acre itself is wholly within the scheme, as is about half Drury Lane and half the north side of the Strand, but inasmuch as the last-named thoroughfare, as well as St. Martin's Lane, have been dealt with in other books,<sup>1</sup> I need say little about them, except to note such streets and alleys as run from them into Covent Garden itself.

#### ST. MARTIN'S LANE

By a passage in the 1603 edition of Stow it would seem as if St. Martin's Lane had already then begun to pass from its earlier rural state into a partially built on roadway, for the topographer speaks at that time of "a continuall new building of divers fayre houses . . . on the north side of a lane that turneth up to the parish church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields." Howell, in his *Londinopolis*, more or less confirms this statement when he writes that "on the west side of St. Martin's Church

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of the Strand*, by the author.

*Charing Cross and its Neighbourhood*, by J. H. Macmicheal, which, I may say, I consider one of the best of all the books written on special parts of London.



and Lane are many gentile fair houses in a row, built by the same Earl of Salisbury who built Britain's Bourse, but somewhat before."

Now Britain's Bourse was begun in June 1608, and opened in the April of the following year, and this places the earliest development of St. Martin's Lane at least half a dozen years earlier than the date assigned to it by Cunningham. As a matter of fact the 1585 Plan shows the roadway to have been known by the name of St. Martin's Lane even thus early, for it is there described as "The waye from Charing Cross, called St. Martin's Lane."

In those days the roadway was but one of those quasi-country lanes that intersected the fields now thickly covered by houses ; but it is shown as being one of the largest of them, varying in width at different points—fairly narrow at the north end by St. Giles's Church, where it joined what is now West Street, and gradually increasing in width till it reached its junction with the present Chandos Street ; and becoming again narrower at this point until it opened out, at its southern end, into Charing Cross. The only houses shown in it, in 1585, were a few small dwellings extending from the Strand to St. Martin's Church, on the east side, and a similar number marking the Royal Mews, on the west. The Lane debouched into the Strand at a rather more easterly point than it does to-day, passing through, roughly, what is now Duncannon Street into the main thoroughfare.

Thus St. Martin's Lane, even as an urban street, is one of no little antiquity, although there is practically nothing left in it now to lead one to suppose it to have even a century of history behind it, except the names of some of its quaint little by-ways : the *Hop Garden*, or as Strype terms it, the Hop Yard, which belonged to Sir Hugh Platt, the horticulturist, who had here a kind of nursery where no doubt a tentative cultivation of hops was carried on ; *Goodwins Court*, with its still surviving, but surprisingly little-known, range of early bow-windowed houses ; *May's Buildings*, bearing the date 1739 ; *The Vineyard*, and so forth.

It was, however, not till between the years 1634 and 1638, when Covent Garden was developed by the Earl of Bedford, that the east side of St. Martin's Lane was built over, and then such houses as were erected only reached as far north as Long Acre. On the west side of the street there were, with the exception of the houses just referred to, no buildings except the Watch House, which is shown in the 1585 plan as being approximately where the statue of George IV, at the north-east corner of Trafalgar Square, now stands. Beyond this Watch House the churchyard attached to St. Martin's Church was situated, and further north still was the area, comprising some five acres, being a portion of what was then called Swan Close (it was later to become Leicester Fields, and is now of course Leicester Square), which James I granted to the Earl of Salisbury, in 1608.

This grant, by the way, had a repercussion on the development of St. Martin's Lane, for in the year in which it was made a payment of £100 was authorised for the construction of a sewer "from St. Martin's Lane to St. Giles's, in order, as is stated in the *Calendar of State Papers*<sup>1</sup> that the King's passage through those fields might be sweeter and more commodious. As Mr. Kingsford, in his *Early History of Piccadilly*, states, "the question of drainage in this locality was to prove troublesome for years to come, and the construction of this sewer was one of the first steps towards its improvement."

It was a considerable time before Lord Salisbury developed that portion of St. Martin's Lane which had been granted to him, and at least thirty years after that date the drainage above referred to is mentioned as being interfered with by the erection of houses by him, on the west side of the lane, those "many gentile fair houses built in a row" to which, as we have seen, Howell refers.

By the closing years of James I's reign all this part of St. Martin's Lane was practically built over, and when Charles I ascended the throne, the street had become almost as fashionable a residential one as Park Lane is

<sup>1</sup> For 1603-11.

to-day. And, indeed, so it remained till the first two or three decades of the eighteenth century, when Strype (in 1720) describes it as "a very great thoroughfare both for foot and horse, and well inhabited, having good built houses, especially on the west, where the wall before the houses was lately pulled down, and the courts laid open, with a fine freestone pavement which was secured from carts and coaches by handsome posts, which hath much added to the beauty of the street and the conveniency of the inhabitants."

In earlier days, as I have already indicated, St. Martin's Lane extended down to the west end of the Strand, opposite Northumberland House (where Northumberland Avenue is now), and ended practically at the spot where the statue of Havelock stands. This opening into the main thoroughfare gives point to Evelyn's remark, in his Diary for May 14th, 1662, where he tells us that, after attending to various civic matters, he "went to view how St. Martin's Lane might be made more passable into the Strand."

The creation of Trafalgar Square cut off the west side of the street, and, for there is a bright lining even to the clouds of civic demolition, gave to Gibb's wonderful church a vista it had before sadly lacked—a fact made obvious by William Hunt's beautiful water-colour drawing of the structure looking up St. Martin's Lane, which Ruskin once likened to "a bit of Hogarth," and which shows the noble façade of the church, then hidden from the west by the opposite houses. Incidentally we can see from this picture the old buildings in the Lane, which were destroyed when St. Martin's Public Library was erected.

At this point formerly stood one or two ancient taverns: the "Chequer," later the "Coach and Horses," and as Mr. Macmicheal surmises, the original of the inn scene in the *Harlot's Progress*; the "Star"; and the "King's Head," which is described by an advertisement as "over against the Mews Gate, Charing Cross" in 1700, when a "Hermaphrodite" was exhibited there.

It was near by, too, that the turnpike which is said



to have occupied the site in front of No. 28 St. Martin's Lane, once stood, although there is no indication of it in Rocque's plan or in the earlier one of Morden and Lea. That it was here, however, is proved by Steele's paper in *The Spectator* for August 12th, 1712, in which he describes his drive in pursuit of a young lady whose carriage passed through Long Acre on its way to St. James's. "Thereupon we drove," writes the essayist, "for King Street, to save the Pass at St. Martin's Lane."

A little way up the lane, on the west side, was an opening known as Duke's Court, or Duke's Street as it became later, and here the famous bookbinder, Roger Payne, had his dwelling and here died, after a busy life, in 1787, being buried in the graveyard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, nearly opposite. It is said that when signs were generally dispensed with in 1762, those in Duke's Court were taken down and affixed to the fronts of the houses.

There was a variety of little alleys leading out of St. Martin's Lane on the west side, before one reached what is really now its present southern termination, but these were swept away during the changes made here at various times, beginning with the formation of Trafalgar Square in 1831; so in any case Red Lion Court and Grant's Court, and Ellis Court, and Hemming's Row (the Dirty Lane, of Morden and Lea's 1682 plan), and Duke's Court do not concern us. The Stocks stood close by the last-named, and the Watch-house where by the by many noted chess players were once wont to foregather.

The Workhouse was also near, abutting on St. Martin's Churchyard, till in 1867 it was demolished for the extension of the National Gallery. A study of Horwood's plan of London (1799) shows clearly the various positions of these places.

On the right the thoroughfare is joined to-day by King William Street, but formerly a turning called Moor's Yard, connecting St. Martin's Lane with Church Lane (which ran into the Strand opposite Villier's Street), occupied approximately a portion of the ground now covered by this thoroughfare. Moor's

Yard is said in early days to have been a place where malefactors were executed, and there was a horse-pond here where, in 1738, a case of ducking occurred.

Although certain houses had been erected in St. Martin's Lane, several efforts to prevent overbuilding in this parish had been made in the reign of Charles I, and newly built places were actually ordered in some cases to be pulled down. But notwithstanding such drastic measures, so greatly did the parish increase in population (Richard Baxter (1615-1691) estimated it at 40,000) that in the latter years of the seventeenth century Burnet was able to call the living of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, "the greatest cure in England."

Close to the church, indeed immediately opposite its porch, stood the Round House, the scene of that horrible tragedy related by Walpole<sup>1</sup> in the letter to Mann in which he records the apprehension of Jack Spencer and his friends in Covent Garden.

"There has lately been the most shocking scene of murder imaginable," he writes: "a parcel of *drunken* constables took it into their heads to put the laws in execution against *disorderly* persons, and so took up every woman they met, till they had collected five or six and twenty, all of whom they thrust into St. Martin's Round-House, where they kept them all night, with doors and windows closed. The poor creatures, who could not stir or breathe, screamed as long as they had any breath left, begging at least for water: one poor wretch said she was worth eighteen-pence, and would gladly give it for a draught of water, but in vain! So well did they keep them there, that in the morning four were found stifled to death, two died soon after, and a dozen more are in a shocking way. In short, it is horrid to think what the poor creatures suffered: several of them were beggars, who, from having no lodging, were necessarily found in the street, and others honest labouring women. One of the dead was a poor washerwoman, big with child, who was returning home late from wash-

<sup>1</sup> The keeper of the Round House, William Bird, was taken, tried, and condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to transportation.

ing. One of the constables is taken, and the others absconded ; but I question if any of them will suffer death, though the greatest criminals in this town are the officers of justice ; there is no tyranny they do not exercise, no villainy of which they do not partake.”<sup>1</sup>

Malcolm might well describe the place as that “ execrable watch-house and sheds in front of the church.”

Strype, as we have seen, speaks of St. Martin’s Lane as being not merely a great thoroughfare, well inhabited, especially on the western side, but adds that the demolition of a wall which formerly stood before the houses and thus opened up the courts, together with “ the fine freestone pavement secured from carts and coaches by handsome posts set up,” added greatly to its attractiveness. This was after paving had been instituted, for before then the state of the street was a by-word. Paving was a novelty which deserved perpetuation in those days, and thus we get courts and alleys specially dignified by this adjective, and here, as in St. James’s Street and Piccadilly, to take two examples, a certain portion of the street was known as The Pavement, or The Terrace. Thus we find a cabinet-maker erecting his sign of the “ Crown and Looking Glass,” and specifying the exact position of his premises as being “ at the lower end of the paved stones, St. Martin’s Lane.”

On that portion known as The Pavement, other signs were the “ Golden Fleece,” and the “ Bible and Anchor,” which merely indicated business premises, and not, in these instances, taverns.

In Burn’s *Catalogue of Tokens* we find one John Ladd issuing a halfpenny, from his house near the church in St. Martin’s Lane in 1667 ; while in Akerman’s more comprehensive list, we have ten more given, among them being a halfpenny issued by John Williams, who describes himself as the King’s Chairman, and his dwelling as being “ at ye lower end of St. Martin’s Lane.”

In its earliest days St. Martin’s Lane was known as

<sup>1</sup> Shenstone also records the horrible happening.



“the West Church Lane,” and it was here, when it was so designated, that Sir Thomas Mayerne, the famous doctor of the seventeenth century, who numbered James I, Charles I, and Henry IV of France among his patients, was living in 1613. Two doors away was the house occupied by the portrait-painter Daniel Mytens, who was residing there from 1622 to 1634, and close by lived Sir John Finett, the then authority on ambassadorial procedure and precedence, about which he wrote a well-known book. It is said that Charles, Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles I), let him the house for twelve years at a rent of sixpence a year ; so that it would appear that this portion of the Crown lands had been bestowed on the Prince. Other seventeenth-century residents in St. Martin’s Lane were Sir Benjamin Rudyard, in a house next to Finett’s ; Abraham Vanderdort, the keeper of Charles I’s pictures, of which he compiled an elaborate catalogue ; Sir William Alexander, afterwards Earl of Stirling (in 1631–2) ; Carew Raleigh (the great man’s nephew), who appears twice in the Rate Books, under the years 1636–8, and again in 1664 ; and two very opposite characters, Sir Kenelm Digby and Sir John Suckling, both of whom were living here in 1641.

Later in the century the Earl of Shaftesbury occupied a house, on the site of which No. 114 now stands, from 1675 to 1677 ; Thomas Tenison, when Vicar of St. Martin’s (he became Archbishop of Canterbury), and two physicians, successively in the same house, Dr. Thomas Willis and Dr. Edmund Dickinson, are also to be numbered among former eminent residents here in the days of the Stuarts.

It is often difficult enough, as those who have investigated them know, to tell with exactitude from the Rate Books on which side a house was actually situated, unless its proximity to a street or alley is specified, but it would seem, as in these early days, the west side of St. Martin’s Lane was the more fashionably inhabited, that it was there these illustrious ones dwelt. Such places as were to be found on the east side were chiefly shops, lodging houses or taverns, and one of the latter,



*After a water-colour drawing by T. H. Shepherd*

DR. BOSSY, THE QUACK, IN COVENT GARDEN





"The Portobello," which bore the date 1638 on its front, and a sign of a ship painted by Monamy, recalls Admiral Vernon, whose birthday we have seen the Hell Fire Club celebrating in Covent Garden, and whose portrait was the sign of the house as it then was of so many in London. This tavern was near the church, and rather further up the Lane was Tom's Coffee House (not to be confounded with the once famous Tom's in Russell Street), between Chandos Street and May's Buildings where the Westminster Fire Assurance Office was inaugurated in a house on the site of one once occupied by Speaker Lenthall ; afterwards going successively to Bedford Street and King Street. One of the engines attached to the Merchants' Waterworks was erected on Tom's premises.

The erection of the Coliseum, by Messrs. Matcham & Co., the well-known theatrical architects, altered much of the lingering old world air at this spot, for it narrowed Taylor's Buildings, in ancient days called Dawson's Alley, it altered the appearance of May's Buildings, and it swept away two taverns, the "Star and Garter" and the "Black Horse," as well as various adjacent tenements, including those in what were known as Charles Buildings, where by the way Isaac Ware, the architect, once dwelt as a chimney-sweep's assistant !

#### MAY'S BUILDINGS

This turning between Nos. 40 and 41 St. Martin's Lane links up that street with Bedfordbury, and was formed in 1739, by a builder named May, who himself lived at No. 43, in the main thoroughfare.

Nollekens says that he considered Mr. May's house, the front of which its owner had ornamented with pillars supporting a cornice, as "one of the neatest specimens of architectural brickwork in London." As a proof of how comparatively trifling things can exist in London for years when important structures become the prey of the house-breaker, I may say that these embellishments were still *in situ* in 1920.

May's Buildings have been widened in recent times,

but the original stone tablet recording their name, is preserved in the wall of the north corner house.

It was here, at a tavern known as the Sutherland Arms, kept by one Tom Rees, at No. 7, that the members of the Eccentrics Club preferred to hold their meetings. At first they foregathered at Fulham's in Chandos Street, then at the "Crown" in Vinegar Yard, Drury Lane, but subsequently migrated to May's Buildings. The club is said to have consisted of no fewer than forty thousand members! Fox, Sheridan, Melbourne and Brougham, being at various times on the roll. Theodore Hook became a member on the same night as Sheridan, and at a later date, another eccentric, F. W. N. Bayley, in one of his novels gives a word picture of the meetings of the club in May's Buildings. The Sutherland Arms, during the early years of the nineteenth century, was noted for its cuisine, and its head-waiter accounted the best in London. Shiel, the Irish patriot, and "Pope" Davies, a friend of B. R. Haydon, were regular frequenters of the place in those days.

May's Buildings was otherwise notorious, for here, according to Foote, in his play entitled *Taste*, there existed a regular manufactory of sham "old masters," at the time when many of the *new* masters, Reynolds among them, who were living in St. Martin's Lane were not so certain of a ready sale.

#### KYNASTON'S ALLEY

Behind the premises of the very old-established firm of Messrs. J. W. Harrison & Sons, at Nos. 45-7 St. Martin's Lane, a business which dates from 1745, and has been carried on by six generations of the same family, is a little court known as *Chenister's Alley*, but which ought to enjoy its earlier and proper name of Kynaston's Alley, having been so named after that Sir Francis Kynaston, the poet, who lived in Bedfordbury in 1636, and whom we shall meet when we come to that street.

When Roubiliac, the great sculptor, had his studio in Peter's Court, where by the way he executed the statue

of Handel, so long in Vauxhall Gardens, a studio subsequently demolished, and its site for a time occupied by a Society of Friends meeting house, "No. 63 St. Martin's Lane, behind which the Court was situated, accommodated him," says Nollekens, "with a distinct passage through to his premises, which site is now held by three persons ; one is the printer of a Sunday paper entitled *The Watchman*." After Roubiliac's death, an indifferent pupil of his, one Read, who produced the monument to Admiral Tyrrell, in the Abbey, took on his master's studio, and advertised himself as "Mr. Roubiliac's successor." What a successor !

### HEMMING'S ROW

*Peter's Court*, described by Strype as "a very handsome and gentile Place, with good Houses, well contrived, with little gardens to them," is clearly shown on Horwood's plan as being L-shaped and as having one entrance into St. Martin's Lane, on the west side between what were then numbered 110 and 111, and *Hemming's Row* which also entered the main thoroughfare, just opposite Chandos Street, with the workhouse wall forming its southern boundary. Roubiliac's studio here had once served as a dancing academy, and after the sculptor's death and the vacation of it by Read, it became a drawing school, the precursor of the Royal Academy. Hogarth who was a prime mover in the new venture, and has left a picture of the interior of the place, now at Burlington House, tells how he proposed, after Sir James Thornhill's death in 1734, that a number of artists should subscribe for the hire of premises, and how the room in St. Peter's Court was selected, being furnished with certain properties that had previously belonged to the Academy run by his father-in-law. Most of the artists of the middle eighteenth century received their training here, until the Royal Academy was started in 1781. It would seem that Sir James Thornhill's school, of which an advertisement appears in the *London Journal* for October 1722, was a precursor



of the St. Peter's Court Academy and was situated in St. Martin's Lane itself.

St. Peter's Court is now absorbed by the headquarters of Messrs. Chatto & Windus, the well-known publishers.

*Cecil Court* was another of the small byways on the west side of St. Martin's Lane, and nearly faced New Street opposite. To-day (for it still exists) you will seek long enough before you find any remains of antiquity in this passage, but it has its memories; for in it occurred the fire which caused Hogarth's mother to die of fright in June 1735, a fire not without a suspicion of incendiarism on the part of a certain Mrs. Calloway, who kept the brandy-shop in which it originated, and who was actually committed to Newgate in consequence. Fourteen houses were destroyed, and one, belonging to John Huggins,<sup>1</sup> late Warden of the Fleet, was badly damaged.

One once well-known engraver, Abraham Raimbach, was born in Cecil Court in 1776.

Indeed the purlieus of St. Martin's Lane was a veritable nursery of the arts. Sir James Thornhill occupied a large house, now covered by the Duke of York's Theatre, at No. 104, with a staircase painted by the artist in the allegorical manner with which his name is associated. After Thornhill, Van Nost, the sculptor of the statue of George I, once in the centre of Leicester Fields, came to live here, as did later still Francis Hayman, the scene-painter, but chiefly remembered as the decorator of the rooms at Vauxhall Gardens. By the way, he was in Hogarth's company one day at Moll King's in Covent Garden, when the latter sketched the girl squirting brandy from her mouth, subsequently introduced into one of the "Rake's Progress" series.

In the Lane itself Fuseli, the eccentric painter of weird and terrible subjects, a visit to whom in his later abode in Berners Street is recounted with all his inimitable touches, by Benjamin Robert Haydon, lived for four years (1784-8) in the house, No. 100, then belonging to an indifferent artist named Cartwright.

<sup>1</sup> Huggins was associated with the infamous Bambridge, in the charges concerning the carrying on of the Fleet Prison.

This house was later occupied by Flight and Robson, the organ-builders, who here exhibited their Apollonicon which drew crowded audiences, at a time when people became excited over mechanical appliances, especially if they were endowed with Greek names. In the *Cicerone* or *Fashionable Guide* for 1830 the instrument is mentioned as to be seen and heard at 101 St. Martin's Lane, from one to four, admittance one shilling. It is described as "A grand Musical Instrument, performing by its mechanical powers the most celebrated Overtures, Songs, Duets, Glees, &c." Still later, the premises were opened as a Casino, the earliest of such places it is said in London, where among other advanced things, the Bloomer (for which see *Punch*) was advocated and a Bloomer Ball actually given.

Perhaps the most illustrious resident, although but a temporary one, in St. Martin's Lane, was Sir Joshua Reynolds, who during his early days in London, appears to have lodged in a house nearly opposite May's Buildings, which Mr. Austin Dobson identifies with Thornhill's old abode. He did not, however, remain long, for in the course of the year (1753) in which he came here, he removed to No. 5 Great Newport Street, until he finally settled in Leicester Fields. But an almost equally familiar eighteenth-century name is also connected with the street, for here once dwelt the great furniture-maker, Chippendale, at the sign of the "Chair," which was at No. 60, on the east side of St. Martin's Lane, two doors beyond New Street, and here, in 1754, he published his *Gentlemen's and Cabinet Maker's Director*. Three doors further on, at No. 63, Roubiliac lived after he had left St. Peter's Court; and here he died, from overwork, on January 11th, 1762. Another contemporary sculptor who resided for a time in the same thoroughfare, was Peter Scheemakers, when he first arrived in London, and was working for Plumière and Francis Bird. In 1741, however, he moved to Vine Street, so that his sojourn in our area was only a short and temporary one.

St. Martin's Lane joins Long Acre at the point where its upper portion, Little (later called Upper) St. Martin's Lane, is divided from it by Newport Street (which is just

outside our area) where the Old Slaughter's Coffee House, the chief rendezvous of the artists' colony in this part of the town, was situated ; its exact position being on the west side three doors from Newport Street, a site since obliterated by the formation of Cranbourn Street, but in 1815, forming Nos. 74 and 75 St. Martin's Lane.

Old Slaughter's bow windows looked directly down Long Acre, and Fairholt, who made a sketch of the place in 1826, shows it to have possessed a very attractive elevation. It was, at the time when the London streets were only partially paved, known as "The Coffee House on the Pavement."

Hogarth was among the innumerable eighteenth-century artists who frequented the place, and later such men as David Wilkie and Benjamin Robert Haydon were habitués ; while it enters into our literature in the pages of *Vanity Fair*. In more recent times it was carried on by Messrs. Reid and Co., but in 1842 it was pulled down, when Cranbourn Street was formed. Many details of it and its frequenters, are to be found in the diaries and letters covering the long period (it was started by Thomas Slaughter in 1692) of its existence.

It appears to have had the epithet of "old" applied to it as early as 1742, in which year an advertisement so designates it ; while another public announcement proves that *Young Slaughter's Coffee House*, also in St. Martin's Lane, was in existence at that time (hence of course the distinguishing titles), although it has been generally supposed that both coffee-houses dated from at least eighteen years later.

Young Slaughter's was domiciled at No. 82 St. Martin's Lane, and its comparatively brief existence did not naturally produce anything like the associations which clung to its rival. But as artists affected the one, so scientific men gave a certain tone to the other, and Young Slaughter's could boast the occasional presence of such famous ones as John Hunter, Dr. Solander, Captain Cook, Sir Joseph Banks, and Smeaton, since all these foregathered at a club the meetings of which took place on the premises.

Between these two coffee-houses lived Ambrose



Philips, the "Namby Pamby" of *The Dunciad*. He resided here for five years from 1720, but in 1725 is marked in the Rate Books as "gone." The New Theatre close by covers the sites of various premises, among which was at No. 85 Miss Luker's girls' school, the National Penny Bank and the Wantage Club.

Among other notable people who have lived in St. Martin's Lane, in the past, are several artists. One of these was Sir Francis Bourgeois, the portrait painter and founder of Dulwich Gallery, who was born here in 1756 ; and John Gwynn, the architect, remembered for his book on *London and Westminster Improved* (the dedication of which to George III was written by his friend, Dr. Johnson) which anticipates so many of the improvements subsequently carried out in London by others (Cranbourn Street itself for example) who have lifted Gwynn's ideas often enough without acknowledgment. Gwynn lived in a small dwelling at the end of the garden of the house (later Nos. 76 and 77) which James Paine, the architect, had built for himself next door to Old Slaughter's Coffee House. Paine designed Gwynn's little abode, as he did another next to it, for Samuel Wale, the painter and book illustrator.

In another house, No. 96, on the west side, dwelt a notorious rather than a famous person ; notably that Dr. Misaubin, the "Dr. Mizebank, a foreigner," of "Trusler's" description, the quack whose "pill" was as well known to a certain class of the community in London as was that of Dr. Jenkins (La Perle Jenkins of Daudet's *Le Nabab*), in Paris, at a later date.

Misaubin's house, according to Nollekens, had a large staircase which was decorated with a mural painting by Clermont, the French painter. The quack's unpleasant features have been preserved for us by Hogarth, who introduces both him and his blowsy wife, into the *Marriage à la Mode*, the room in which they are there shown, being actually that at the back of the house where the doctor interviewed his patients.

Another artistic memory is evoked at this spot, for it was in a large apartment, nearly opposite Old Slaughter's, that in 1775, Nathaniel Hone exhibited his pictorial

satire on Sir Joshua and his suggested way of "composing" his works, a picture which its painter termed "The Conjuror."

In addition to these artistic and literary records, it is interesting to remember that the great banking-house of Coutts, now on the site of the Lowther Arcade, whither it went from the Strand opposite, was first started in Queen Anne's reign, by Messrs. Middleton and Campbell, in St. Martin's Lane.

St. Martin's Lane is linked up with Bedfordbury, and so with the central portion of the area here under consideration, by a number of small courts and alleys which, owing to rebuilding and demolition, are to-day fewer than they were originally, but yet include those I have already referred to : the Hop Garden, May's Buildings, Goodwin's Court, and so forth. Besides these subsidiary outlets, however, on the east, it has certain more important thoroughfares leading from it. These are Chandos Street, New Street, a westerly continuation of King Street, and Garrick Street, the creation of which cut through Rose Street, which zigzagged from Long Acre to King Street, but was not open to St. Martin's Lane at all.

#### CHANDOS STREET

*Chandos Street* is a thoroughfare of some antiquity for it appears in the Rate Books so early as 1637, and Hollar, in his 1648 Bird's-eye View of London, shows it as a wide street flanked by houses of no little size and character. On Morden and Lea's plan of 1682, it appears as Shandois Street. It was so named after George<sup>1</sup> Brydges, 6th Lord Chandos of Sudeley, the great-uncle of the "Princely" Duke of Chandos, who created Canons and began a palace on the north side of Cavendish Square. It was at its junction with St. Martin's Lane that the turnpike before alluded to, in all probability stood. The house attached to this barrier is said

<sup>1</sup> It is usually stated that it was William Brydges after whom the street was named. But as it appears in the Rate Books under this name in 1627, and as William did not succeed his brother George, in the title, till 1655, this must be an error.

to have been removed at the instance of the Earl of Salisbury who disliked its appearance as seen from the windows of his house which stood on the west side of St. Martin's Lane, overlooking it. The site of the turnpike became later Pullen's Wine Vaults, and later still the Chandos Tavern, and thus opposite the shop of Meriade Gibus, later succeeded by Cuthbertson, who invented the opera-hat which goes by his name. One wonders if a movable model of that useful but now, I am told, *démodé* headgear, which one used to see at work in the window (it was a *red-hat*, I remember), is still attracting attention, as it used to do, *consule Planco*.

During the eighteenth century Chandos Street possessed a number of shops and taverns, but only a few private houses, for it was always rather in the nature of a commercial than a residential thoroughfare. Among the signs which hung in the street were, for instance, The Crown and Golden Letters, where one Tom Joyce, lace cleaner, sold gold fringe and embroidered brocades, and in an advertisement in the *Daily Advertiser* for January 1742, informs the public that he has lived in Chandos Street for fifteen years, and that he has not his equal for lace cleaning in England !

Men milliners affected this street, too, such as Joseph More, at the Wheatsheaf at No. 3 ; Thelwall, the father of John Thelwall, also carried on business as a silk-mercator here, and here in 1764, his better-known son was born. Mr. Macmicheal says that the last of the trade here only disappeared about the year 1865.

One Matthew Blakiston, a grocer, also had his shop, opposite the One Tun Tavern, and issued a flaming advertisement of the quality of his goods in the public prints of *circa* 1738.

This "One Tun" was a once well-patronised tavern here (it was later rechristened the "One Tun and King's Arms"), and was at one time carried on by Ruthven, the Bow Street runner, who had been instrumental in apprehending not only the Cato Street conspirators, but also Thurtell who murdered Mr. Weare. There is in *The Gentleman's Magazine* an obituary notice of him (he died in Chandos Street in 1844) which indicates that he



was so eccentric that although he had written an autobiography, he could by no means be persuaded to publish it. *O si sic omnes !*

An early reference to the One Tun Tavern is to be found in *The Weekly Journal* for December 6th, 1718, where a fracas between four gentlemen of the road began by a dispute over their shares in a robbery. The drawer of the tavern overhearing them, however, sent for a constable, with the result that the disputants, although armed to the teeth, were apprehended and carried off to Newgate.

The mention of highwaymen reminds me that at yet another tavern in Chandos Street, known as the "Hole-in-the-Wall" (it occupied the site of Nos. 51 and 52, and is now called the "Marquis of Granby"), Claude Duval was arrested in the reign of Charles II, when the house was kept by a certain "Mother" Maberley, a cast-off mistress of the Duke of Buckingham.

In those spacious days these gentlemen seem to have been free to go where they liked, and to boast openly of their adventures in the most public resorts. We know they were thus to be found in St. James's Street, and in the then rural haunts of Knightsbridge, and so it is not surprising to find them in the then questionable locality of Covent Garden.

But others than regular highwaymen were occasional disturbers of the peace here, and the Temple produced its share of such, as is well known. Of one of these fracas, we learn the following particulars, from a news-sheet dated January 6th, 1751 : "Last night, at about 11 of the clock, three young Gentlemen of the Law, going along Chandos Street, in their merriments thought fit to break a Lamp at the Door of Mr. Brown, a Butcher, whereupon his Servant stept after them to know the Reason, which they explain'd by several blows on his Head, and drove him back again into his Master's shop, which was soon filled with People in a tumultuous Manner. Mr. Brown being at that time with some Friends at the Swan, word was brought of a Riot at his House, and that his Wife was frightened, his Servants beat, and his Goods like to be thrown into the Street ;

the poor Man immediately ran over the Way to protect his Family, and being told which were the Offenders, he seizes two of them, and being a stout Man tumbles them Neck and Heels out of his Shop, a Watchman hauls out a third, so they were carried to the Round House. The next Morning on a Hearing before the Justice, the Parties were all dismissed."

The "Three Tuns" was probably another of the Chandos Street hostelrys which were no better than they should be, if we are to judge from the fact that it was here that the notorious Sally Pridden, known alternatively as Sally Salisbury, because she had a facial resemblance to the then Countess of Salisbury, stabbed the Hon. John Finch, in the year 1723. Sir Godfrey Kneller painted the portrait of the lady who is described by Caulfield, in his *Remarkable Characters*, as having the reputation of being "the most notorious woman that ever infested the Hundreds of Old Drury or Covent Garden either."

The "Three Tuns," which was apparently situated at the junction of Chandos Street and Bedford Street, indeed on the site of No. 66 in the latter thoroughfare (hence, perhaps, I ought to have dealt with it in that connection), was one of Pepys' West-end resorts, as was (as we shall see) the "Rose," in Russell Street, and the "Fleece" in Covent Garden itself. Even in those days it must have had a rather lurid character, for here, in 1679, Robert Taylor, a dancing master, anticipated Sally Pridden in homicide, by killing a Mr. Price. Taylor, who lived hard by in James Street, got away, and the ten pounds reward ("to be had of Mr. Reynolds, bookseller, in Henrietta Street") offered was accompanied by the following description of the murderer, "a person of middle stature, hath a cut across his chin, a scar in his left cheek, having two fingers and a thumb of one hand burnt at the ends shorter than the other, round visaged, thick lips, his own hair being of a light brown under a periwig." Not, obviously, a prepossessing person.

Nor is this the only record of dirty work done at the "Three Tuns," for in February 1725 two officers of the

Guards, Captain Turtle and Brigadier Wilson, having a quarrel there, fought a duel on the spot, with the result that Captain Turtle died of his wounds on the following day, confessing, however, that he was the aggressor.

One of the most resorted to taverns in this street, during the eighteenth century, was known as "Lebeck's Head," which was situated at the north-west corner of Half Moon Passage, now obliterated by the lower portion of Bedford Street, then a narrow continuation of that thoroughfare into the Strand, from the point where Chandos Street joins it. "Lebecks" thus stood where the two thoroughfares meet, at the south-east corner of Chandos Street. Lebeck was a noted cook during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and Kneller painted his portrait. His house had a commercial flavour for it was chiefly the resort of such as had shops in the market, and various references to it in this capacity are to be found in contemporary news-sheets.

Another tavern here was the "Ship," and yet another the "Key," a notorious place during the eighteenth century, where rakes from the west and harlots from the east consorted on common ground. It possessed a gateway into a yard, and private coaches were not infrequently to be seen passing under the former and setting down quietly noble and even royal habitués. In course of time the "Key" became respectable and was rebuilt, blossoming out into an hotel of considerable size, which was, however, taken down when the street improvements of 1830 were being carried out.

The "Bell and Dragon," which was flourishing during George II's reign in Chandos Street, has no annals (not even lurid ones) to its credit or discredit.

Among trade-tokens is one (dated 1667) of the sign of the "Three Elms" in Chandos Street, then belonging to Edward Boswell; another (recorded by Akerman) has "At the Gate in Shandos Street" as its legend. But this thoroughfare is not productive of much in this direction, and on the whole its chief interest, I think, centres in the fact that it is said to have been the first in



London, perhaps in England, in which balconies were added to the upper windows of the houses. The Earl of Arundel, in the seventeenth century, was the introducer of this fashion which he had no doubt seen and admired in Verona and other Italian cities. One or two signs appeared after this innovation had taken place bearing on the subject, such as the Balcony, in Chandos Street itself, and the Iron Balcony, in Drury Lane ; while a certain surgeon, Manton by name, lived at Balcony House, next to the Crown and Sceptre Tavern, in the Old Bailey.

These decorative adjuncts are specifically mentioned by Richard Brome in his play of *Covent Garden Weeded, or the Middlesex Justice of the Peace*, dated 1658. In those days and for long after the word was pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, as we find it in *John Gilpin*.

One other memory is recalled by Chandos Street, for it was here, at No. 3, that Lamert's, formerly Warren's, Blacking Warehouse, where Charles Dickens as a child carried on daily his uncongenial labours, was situated. Curiously enough it was on the other side of our area, namely in Wellington Street, that Dickens, in the days when he had become the most famous man in England, occupied the offices of *Household Words*.

In its early days Chandos Street, which was fairly wide at its eastern end, grew smaller at a point on the north side where what was known as Chelton's Court entered it, and thence gradually diminished in width until it became quite narrow, as Little Chandos Street, and entered St. Martin's Lane. At the junction of Chandos Street and Little Chandos Street, is shown, both by Rocque and Horwood, a small outlet on the southern side, called Vine Street, which turned eastward until it made a plunge due south into Old Round Court, opposite which it had another, but very narrow, entry into Chandos Street. From Old Round Court, an alley led into the Strand. The widening of the west end of Chandos Street and the formation of King William Street in 1829, did away with these little backwaters, and if the majority of them possessed any history,

which is doubtful (just as if they had, it would possibly have been doubtful history), no record of it seems to have been preserved, except with regard to the three Round Courts, for there was New Round Court and Back of Round Court, as well as Old Round Court. Charing Cross Hospital has obliterated the first, and the others have been the victims of "betterment." But they deserve recalling if for nothing else than for the fact that they are examples of the *lucus a non lucendo* principle in street naming, for New Round Court and Back of Round Court were but narrow alleys, and Round Court itself not merely a small square, but as has been said, had more corners than any "court" in London.

### ROUND COURT

The chief interest of *Round Court*, however, centres in the fact that it was a veritable nest of booksellers and publishers (then the same thing) in the eighteenth century.

Although, as William Stow, in his little book on London, dated 1722, speaks of it as noted for mercers, it is probable that the literary fraternity did not begin to invade it, at least to any extent, till somewhat later than that date.

A considerable number of well-known books were issued from Round Court where Charles Marsh, bookseller, was established at the Cicero's Head, and Oliver Payne at the Horace's Head. From the Plato's Head, near Round Court, *Peregrine Pickle* was printed "for the Author," in 1751, and in *New Round Court*, T. Woodman sold and published books at the Camden's Head, although I have seen it stated that his shop was next door to the Horace's Head in Round Court itself.

Besides their literary atmosphere (there was a Reading Room here, kept by one Williams, who, by the way, was fined £5, in 1798, for taking a penny for the loan of a newspaper, as recorded by Timbs<sup>1</sup>), both Round Court and New Round Court were quite considerable shopping centres. Here Smellie, the engraver, had his

<sup>1</sup> *Walks and Talks about London.*

premises ; here J. Pinchbeck sold fans and fan-mounts at the sign of the Fan and Crown, in New Round Court ; and close by, Munday's Coffee House, afterwards in Maiden Lane, was situated ; while Round Court is mentioned in *The Spectator*,<sup>1</sup> which is surely enough immortality for any London site !

### “ THE BERMUDAS ”

Anyone studying Rocque's 1746 plan of London will observe a congeries of small courts and alleys leading into the Strand, in this corner of our area.

There are, for example, *Hudson's Court*, of which no history is preserved, although, as was the general rule, it probably takes its name from an owner of houses here ; *Lancaster Court*, in which a Rainbow Coffee House was situated, and which owes its name to the desire to perpetuate one of the vicars of St. Martin's close by ; *Church Court*, which linked up Church Lane, on the north side of the Church, with the Strand ; *Hewel's Court*, another passage-way between these two ; *Castle Court* and *Hewey* or *Hewis Court*.

All this part was that once known as the Bermudas or Porridge Island, and one remembers Ben Jonson's reference to the “ Town pirates here at hand ” who “ Have their Bermudas and their Straights i' the Strand.” In those days the place was a hotbed of vice and disorderly doings. Gifford, in his notes to his edition of Ben Jonson's works, referring to the name given this quarter, remarks that “ at a subsequent period this cluster of avenues exchanged the old name of Bermudas for that of the Caribbee Islands, which the learned possessors of the district corrupted, by a happy allusion to the arts cultivated there, into the Cribbee Islands, their present appellation.” Porridge Island seems to have been a name restricted to a paved alley nearer the church, which was so-called because it was full of cook-shops.

<sup>1</sup> No. 304, where Steele writes, “ the humble petition of Bartholomew Ladylove, in the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields,” etc.



## CASTLE COURT

*Castle Court*, which entered the Strand at No. 229, in that thoroughfare, is connected with the fine arts, inasmuch as Shipley here had his well-known Drawing School, where the Society of Arts held their meetings in 1756, and where Nollekens and Nathaniel Smith learned the principles of sculpture and painting.

When the formation of Trafalgar Square and the Strand Improvements scheme were undertaken, in the 'thirties of the last century, new thoroughfares were formed through this area and the little courts and alleys were swept away, to be succeeded by Duncannon Street, named after Lord Duncannon, afterwards 5th Earl of Bessborough, Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests, in 1837; just as Agar Street had been called after Mr. Agar-Ellis, Lord Duncannon's predecessor in the same office, when it was formed in 1830; King William Street and Adelaide Street, laid out about this period, were of course named after the reigning sovereign and his consort.

Concerning the Strand frontage to our area, between St. Martin's Lane and Bedford Street, I do not propose to say anything, because I dealt with that portion of the thoroughfare in my *Annals of the Strand*, and I am not fond of plagiarising—even from myself. But I may note that in King William Street was formerly Toole's Theatre (many of my readers will remember it) which stood on the site where the headquarters of the Oratorian Fathers had been in 1849. The playhouse was demolished, somewhere between 1896 and 1900, when the extension of Charing Cross Hospital took place.

## THE LOWTHER ARCADE

I cannot, too, forbear to mention the Lowther Arcade because that, too, is with the past, being now replaced by Messrs. Coutts's bank, removed from its old premises in the Strand opposite. The Lowther Arcade was designed by Witherdon Young, and was erected (1830-2) by Mr. Herbert, who published a plan of it, a copy of



*From a print by Sutton Nicholls, circa 1725*

THE HOUSE OF LORD ARCHER IN COVENT GARDEN





which is in the Grace collection. It was so-called after Lord Lowther who had been a Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests before Mr. Agar-Ellis and Lord Duncannon.

The Lowther Arcade's attractions may die with those who remember it as a joy of their childhood, but it will always live in *My Lady Nicotine* as the spot where Sir James Barrie once bought (or said he did) *malgri lui*, a remarkable smoking table.

### BEDFORDBURY

The various little by-ways, such as the Hop Garden, Goodwin's Court, Chenister's Alley, and so on, which we have seen debouching from St. Martin's Lane led, as some of them still lead, into the street known as Bedfordbury which connects New Street with Chandos Street

*Bedfordbury*, or The Berrie, *tout court*, as one sometimes finds it written in past records, is one of the oldest thoroughfares in this district, having been formed before 1637, in which year it is first mentioned in the Rate Books. In its early days it was well-inhabited, but in course of time gradually fell from its decent estate into one of squalor, and became, in the words of Peter Cunningham, a nest of low alleys and streets. Luckily in still more recent days a vast improvement has taken place here, and if it cannot be said to have regained its past glory (what of glory it ever had) it can be truthfully asserted that it has at least thrown off its past degradation; the Metropolitan Board of Works, armed with the provisions of the Artisans' Dwelling Act, having seen to that, and the erection of the *Coliseum* in St. Martin's Lane, when a number of small houses were pulled down, having still further improved its condition.

Although in its early days Bedfordbury was, as I have said, quite a good residential spot, yet the only person of note who is recorded as living there, was that Sir Francis Kynaston, the poet and scholar, who is known to have occupied a house here during the years 1638 to 1640; his residence being described as "on the east

side of the street towards Berrie." I confess I should not have been quite satisfied that Kynaston's house was actually in this street; the words "towards Berrie," seeming to me rather to indicate that the poet lived either in Chandos Street, on the south of Bedfordbury, or in New Street, on the north; but in an account of *The Constitution of the Museum Minerva*, published in 1636, it is stated that its home was to be a spacious building erected in 1594, with one front in Bedfordbury and the other in Bedford Street.

Here Kynaston established a sort of literary academy, or as he himself christened it, Museum, with the object of teaching the young idea of King Charles's day foreign languages and art. This "College" did somewhat for the mental needs of the youthful nobility and gentry of the period what Captain Foubert's establishment off Regent Street was to do for their physical requirements in the reign of Charles II. It appears to have been a success, and its curriculum became extended so as to embrace navigation, fortification, architecture, painting, and even riding. It continued to flourish under the Restoration, but when, on the outbreak of the Plague, which is said first to have made its appearance in Covent Garden, Sir Francis petitioned for power to remove his Academy temporarily to Chelsea College, the authorities of that institution fearing infection, resisted the project, and the Minerva had to find quarters elsewhere.

There seems to be some confusion over this incident. For instance, the biographical dictionaries state that Kynaston died in 1642, and that with his demise the Academy came to an end. How then could it have been in existence in 1666, the year of the Plague, and much less how could Kynaston (dead for twenty-four years) have petitioned anybody for anything?

I can only assume that it was on the outbreak of one of the lesser plagues during Charles I's reign, that the poet sought the asylum of Chelsea. As we have seen, Kynaston's name is preserved in the Kynaston's Alley already alluded to.

A later occupant of premises in Bedfordbury was James Payne, the bookseller, who supplied Lord Spencer

with many of the rarities once at Althorp but now in the Rylands Library, at Manchester. Furniture dealers also at one time affected the place in which, in 1861, a mission house, school, and chapel existed (built after the designs of A. W. Blomfield), as well as the Peabody Buildings.

According to Allbut<sup>1</sup> this was the locality of *Tom-All-Alone's*, in *Bleak House*, where Jo consorted with the miserable wretches described by Dickens in chapter sixteen of that work. This may have been so, although there were other parts of this neighbourhood which the description would in those days have equally fitted : " It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people ; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery."

Among the evidences of an earlier and cleaner association, is a tradesman's token, recorded by Burn<sup>2</sup> (who by the way himself lived at 29 Bow Street) of one Elizabeth Roc, who is described on it as living " at the upper end " of the street. The token bears the sign of a Skittle Ball and Two Pins ; while Akerman gives two others : one of Frances Clare, in Bedfordbury—Two Lions rampant supporting a Crown ; and Thomas West—A half-moon, under six candles on a stick, dated 1662.

There were also in Bedfordbury, two signs, one of the Lemon Tree ; the other bearing the effigy of the omnipresent Marquis of Granby. There was, appropriately, another Lemon Tree in Covent Garden Market itself, although the tradesman with that sign, one Charles Ogle, was employed in selling not fruit or vegetables, but Brandy and Rum Orange Shrub. Two other commercial establishments are recorded in the Bedfordbury of the past ; at one of these (No. 2) one Robert Davidson carried on the business of a Woollen Draper and Man's Mercer ; the other was situated in *Turner's Court*, which

<sup>1</sup> *London Rambles with Charles Dickens*.

<sup>2</sup> *Descriptive Catalogue of Tokens of the Seventeenth Century*, 1853.



was an alley on the west side of the street, between Nos. 6 and 7 (as shown in Horwood's plan) where a Mr. Arrowsmith, in 1780, advertises a Red India Shawl for sale.

In Tallis's day (*circa* 1838) that benefactor to London topography speaks of Bedfordbury as then being "a narrow street consisting mostly of small shops extending from New Street into Chandos Street," so that even then, in spite of much dilapidation here, and the presence of a horde of undesirable people, the thoroughfare occupied a place, even if a small one, in the commercial life of London.

### NEW STREET

The *New Street* here referred to is the westerly extension of King's Street, linking the latter thoroughfare up with St. Martin's Lane, into which it debouches nearly opposite the New Theatre. Although small it was in Charles II's day quite a fashionable place of abode, and we find the Lady Chesterfield, whom Vandyck loved, living there, in 1660, in a house on the south side. This was the lady (she was the wife of Lord Stanhope, the first Earl of Chesterfield's son—he died during his father's lifetime) whom Charles II created Countess of Chesterfield for her lifetime.

During the eighteenth century New Street declined in popularity as a residential quarter, but at that period it had at least one interesting inhabitant, for it was here that the elder Flaxman kept his plaster-cast shop, at the sign of the Golden Head, whence, in 1770, the young Flaxman sent his first effort—a model of a man's head—to the Royal Academy.

Mrs. Inchbald, who once lived in Russell Street, is connected with New Street in an amusing and unexpected way, for in her diary she records how on one occasion, she knocked at all the doors here and in King Street, *and then ran away*; hardly conduct one would have expected from the authoress of *A Simple Story*!

But New Street lives in the annals of a more illustrious literary person, for it was here, as most people who know

their Boswell are aware, that Dr. Johnson, on his first coming to London and lodging at Mr. Norris's, in Exeter Street, used to frequent an eating-house his association with which has made it immortal. "I dined," he once told Boswell, "very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the 'Pine Apple' in New Street just by : several of them (its frequenters) had travelled ; they expected to meet every day, but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine ; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny ; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

Opinions vary as to the greatness of Johnson, but let it always be remembered that even in the days of his poverty, he denied himself wine but gave the waiter a tip. One might well be content to go down to posterity with that record even rather than with that of *Rasselas* and *The Dictionary*.

New Street was quite a busy commercial thoroughfare in the eighteenth century, and even earlier. Here was a coffee-house whence its proprietor, Joseph Howard, issued a token, in 1671, with the device of the half-length figure of a man holding a cup into which a hand from the clouds pours something (presumably coffee) from a pot. Underneath is a table bearing three pipes. Akerman, who records this, gives three other tokens as having emanated from tradesmen in this thoroughfare. One of these was a woman, Dorothy Hulet by name, and her device was a Crowned Heart, with the date 1663 ; another was John Savory, who issued his token in 1656 ; and the third was Richard Stevenson, a cheesemonger, the date on his token being 1658.

Benjamin Cooke sold music at the Golden Harp, whence he issued his edition of Corelli's *Violin Sonatas*, edited by Dr. Pepusch, and various other works by the two Scarlattis, Defesch, and Charles Avison (one of Browning's *People of Importance in their Day*, it will be remembered), and a Mr. Conn carried on business as a tobacconist, at No. 20.

Nor were places of refreshment, other than the for ever famous Pine Apple, lacking in New Street. There was, for instance, Pon's Coffee House, and the "Swan," where spirits and wine were to be had, and an "ordinary" was held every day, at one shilling and sixpence a head. At the Civet Cat one Mrs. Hugg, in 1782, was selling a hair-restorer, and a certain cure for freckled or tanned skins; P. Desca, at the sign of the Spaniard, dealt (according to a 1735 advertisement in the *London Evening Post*) in tobacco and snuff; while one shop had the sign of the Corner Pin, an allusion to nine-pins, which its tenant probably made.

In Tallis's Elevations, is one (No. 79) of King Street and New Street. The shops in the latter are there shown to be of a substantial and respectable character, and indicate that if fashion had then long deserted the thoroughfare, its commercial atmosphere was still flourishing. Tallis's letterpress describes it as "a short narrow street of considerable thoroughfare (as a matter of fact before Garrick Street came into existence, it was the chief way between St. Martin's Lane and the east), consisting of respectable retail shops, conducting from the western extremity of King Street into St. Martin's Lane." He adds that "it has lately been projected to make an alteration in this part of the town, by forming a new street from the end of Coventry Street to King Street; if this is acted upon Sydney Passage and one side of Cranbourn Street will be removed, and most probably part of New Street."

Tallis shows all sorts of trades as being carried on in New Street at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign. There were then twenty-nine shops in it, and only No. 2 was vacant.

As Tallis's Elevations are rare, especially the later ones, I need not apologise for here setting down his short Directory of New Street:

1. Swears and Sons, Hosiers.
- 2.
3. Lavell and Kirkland, Grocers.
4. Foster, Trunk Maker.
5. Inglis, Baker.



- 6. Bow Coffee House.
- 7. Terry, Confectioner.
- 8. Bailey, G., Tea Dealer.
- 9. Liles, Ham and Beef Shop.
- 10. Telfer, Hosier.
- 11. Milne and Co., Tea Dealers.
- 12. Simpson, Hosier.
- 13. Speed, Poultrier.
- 14. Moth Coffee House.
- 15. Bowles, Fishmonger.
- 16. Gould, Bootmaker.
- 17-18. Moseley and Son, Plane and Tool Makers.
- 19. Davis and Seward, Wine Merchants.
- 20. Greaves, Tallow Chandler.
- 20. Collins, Butcher.
- 21. Grieves, Cheesemonger.
- 22. Lewis, Bootmaker.
- 23. Cogan and Son, Bootmakers.
- 24. Pearce, Bootmaker.
- 25. Dignam, Belt and Brace Maker.
- 26. Blunett, Bootmaker.
- 27. Kendall, Hat and Cap Maker.
- 28. Dear, C., Picture Dealer.
- 21½. Goldsmith, H., Tobacconist.

### ROSE STREET

When, during the improvements carried out in this quarter during 1855-64, Garrick Street came into existence,<sup>1</sup> it cut through and partially obliterated a curious little thoroughfare known as Rose Street, or as Strype terms it White Rose Street, the south end of which joined New Street at the point where that thoroughfare runs into King Street. After going north-west for a short way, Rose Street suddenly made a turn nearly due west and came to an end at a point whence a small alley called Angel Court linked it up with Long Acre.

Before the end of the street was reached another by-

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Shepherd made a drawing of the construction of Garrick Street, as seen from St. Martin's Lane, and this is preserved in the St. Martin's Library.

way, known as Rose Court, also led into Long Acre ; and, in a direct line with the lower portion of Rose Street, just where it turned due west, yet another turning communicated with a tiny back-water known as Lazenbury, or as Rocque calls it, Glastonbury, Court, through which Long Acre could also be reached. It is at the junction of Rose Street (at No. 33) and Lazenby Alley, that an old tavern bearing the sign of the Lamb and Flag, exists still. Mr. Macmicheal assumes, I think with good reason, that this sign (the arms of the Middle Temple) was used by an old servant of that Inn of Court who had possibly set up here as a tavern-keeper.

The lower portion of Rose Street actually exists, but there is nothing left in it to recall the days when Dryden was assaulted there, although till the 'eighties of the last century, one or two old buildings survived. Indeed, as may be seen by the photograph of the "Lamb and Flag," given in Mr. Jacob's book on Covent Garden, there is now a thoroughly modern air about the place. In this photograph, however, the narrow entrance into Glastonbury or Lazenbury Court is shown in the right hand (or east corner) of the picture.

When or why Glastonbury came to be converted into Lazenbury, I am unable to state. The names, one would have thought, are hardly sufficiently similar to account for that gradual alteration such as has not been uncommon in certain cases of London nomenclature ; but nothing is beyond a Londoner's power, and as I find W. Stow, in 1722, calling the place Glassenbury Court, one can realise how the change gradually came about. Lockie, in his 1815 Directory, gives the name as Lazenbury.

The outstanding memory of Rose Street, linking it up with our literature, was, as I have hinted, the brutal attack made there on Dryden. The poet had, it is supposed, left Wills's Coffee House on the evening of December 18th, 1679, and was proceeding through Rose Street to his lodgings in Long Acre, when he was set upon by three ruffians and severely beaten. The hirelings were paid to do this, by the Earl of Rochester who

had ridiculed Dryden in verse sometime previously, and whom Dryden had himself satirised, or had been supposed by Rochester to do so, in an *Essay on Satire*, a dull effusion really written by the poetaster Lord Mulgrave, and containing hardly a line worthy of the greater man. Rochester in a letter to a friend had already adumbrated what he would do. "If," he wrote, "he (Dryden) falls on me at the blunt, which is his very good weapon in wit, I will forgive him, if you please, and leave the repartee to Black Will with a cudgel."

The following is the contemporary account of the incident as recorded in the *Mercurius Domesticus* :

"Upon the 18th inst., in the evening, Mr. Dryden, the great poet, was set upon in Rose Street, in Covent Garden, by three persons, who calling him rogue, and son of a whore, knockt him down, and dangerously wounded him, but upon his crying out murther, they made their escape ; it is conceived that they had their pay beforehand, and designed not to rob him, but to execute on him some Feminine if not Popish vengeance."

Although Dryden offered a reward of fifty pounds for the discovery of his assailants and their instigator, a reward deposited in the hands of "Mr. Blanchard, goldsmith, next door to Temple Bar" (Mr. Blanchard being partner with Francis Child at "The Marygold"), neither the agents nor their principal were ever brought to book.

A year after this happened there occurred, in Rose Street, the death of another famous literary man. For Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, lived during the latter years of his life here "in a studious retired manner" and, undoubtedly, in no little poverty, and here died of consumption, on September 25th, 1680, being buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden, two days later. The house occupied by Butler was afterwards used as a cook-shop, but during his tenancy, although the street was hardly a fashionable one, Aubrey, indeed, calls it "one of the meanest in that part of the city," both a peer and a baronet are said to have occupied an adjoining house—but, of course, it may have been for a



purpose not necessarily alien from the reputation of much of the neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup>

Among other associations connected with Rose Street is the fact that the infamous Edmund Curll was residing here at the time he published Pope's Literary Correspondence. His shop was known as The Pope's Head. Here, too, it was that Saunders Welch, who succeeded Fielding as magistrate at Bow Street, and whose daughter married Nollekens, the sculptor, once apprehended a law-breaker, under the following circumstances, as related by J. T. Smith, in his *Nollekens and His Times*. "When the streets were entirely paved with pebble-stones up to the houses, Hackney-men could drive their coaches close to the very doors. It happened that Mr. Welch had good information that a most notorious offender, who had for some time annoyed the Londoners in their walks through the green lanes to Mary-le-bone, and who had eluded the chase of several of his men, was in a first-floor of a house in Rose Street, Long Acre. After hiring the tallest hackney-coach he could select, he mounted the box with the coachman, and when he was close against the house, he ascended the roof of the coach, threw up the sash of the first-floor window, entered the room, and actually dragged the fellow from his bed out at the window by his hair, naked as he was, upon the roof of the coach ; and in that way carried the terror of the green lanes down New Street, and up St. Martin's Lane, amidst the huzzas of an immense throng which followed him to Litchfield Street."

#### BEDFORD STREET

To-day Bedford Street is more or less the same width along the whole of its length ; a trifle narrower as it lies between Maiden Lane and the Strand, perhaps, but not markedly so. In earlier days, however, this lower portion, according to contemporary plans, was little

<sup>1</sup> This information is contained in the Collection of Paper-cuttings relating to Covent Garden and its environs, now in the British Museum. The writer responsible for it was a Mr. Gerrill, landlord of the Salutation Tavern in Tavistock Street. It is quoted in Macmicheal's *Charing Cross*.

better than an alley, and was then known as Half-Moon Street from a tavern with that sign, which stood in it, and which, by the way, is mentioned by Ned Ward, in his *London Spy*, as being passed by him and his friend on their way to Covent Garden.<sup>1</sup>

Of Bedford Street itself, that is the upper portion of the present thoroughfare, Strype thus speaks : " It is," he says, " a handsome broad street with very good houses, which, since the Fire of London, are generally taken up by eminent tradesmen, as mercers, lacemen, drapers, and men of other trades. . . . But the west side of this street is the best." Thornbury says that " Bedford Street was first so named in 1766 by the Paving Commissioners." This is a rather misleading statement. What he means, and should have said, is that the lower portion, formerly Half-Moon Street, was thus rechristened ; for the upper section is shown as Bedford Street, by Rocque in 1746, and even by Morden and Lea in 1682, and not unnaturally as it was formed about 1637, and doubtless was then, or soon after, given its present name.

It is an interesting fact that the upper portion of the thoroughfare is in the parish of St. Paul's, Covent Garden ; while the lower forms part of that of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. Bedford Street is a place of many memories, and at least its literary ones are more or less perpetuated by the publishers and booksellers who still make it interesting and even, to authors and readers, alluring. Newspaper offices are also there, and the Civil Service Stores, and so now, as in Strype's day, it can with propriety be termed " a handsome broad thoroughfare with very good houses."

Nearly every street in London has some outstanding circumstance which rises to the mind when we enter it ; and Bedford Street for me is always chiefly associated with Johnson's well-known habit of touching every post as he passed.

Among the earlier residents here was Thomas Sheridan, the father of the better-remembered Richard Brinsley. His house faced Henrietta Street, and one

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I of this book.

day Whyte, the author of *Miscellanea Nova*, was paying him a visit with the object of meeting Dr. Johnson there. "We were standing together at the drawing-room window," says Whyte, recording the incident, "expecting Johnson, who was to dine there. Mr. Sheridan asked me, could I see the length of the garden? 'No, Sir.' 'Take out your opera-glass, Johnson is coming; you may know him by his gait.' I perceived him at a good distance, working along with a peculiar solemnity of deportment, and an awkward sort of measured step. At that time the broad flagging at each side of the streets was not universally adopted, and stone posts were in fashion, to prevent the annoyance of carriages. Upon every post, as he passed along, I could observe he deliberately laid his hand; but missing one of them, when he had got at some distance, he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and immediately returning back, carefully performed the accustomed ceremony, and resumed his former course, not omitting one till he gained the crossing. This, Mr. Sheridan assured me, however odd it might appear, was his constant practice; but why or wherefore he could not inform me."

Who, to-day, can look along Henrietta Street from Bedford Street, without seeing in his mind's-eye that sturdy figure, which lives for us on Macaulay's literary canvas, heaving and puffing along from his lodgings in Bolt Court or the Temple, with something working in that active brain which caused him to pat the posts as he passed, as a child might do.

Although Strype specifies Bedford Street as a favourite resort for mercers and other commercial people, before their coming it had been fashionable and, as it used to be termed, well-inhabited. One of its seventeenth-century residents was the 2nd<sup>1</sup> Earl of Chesterfield whom we meet with in De Grammont's gossiping pages, and who is recorded as living here in 1656. This Earl was also the inditer of "Letters" which duly found their way into book-form, although it was his grandson, the

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that Mr. Lawrence Hutton, that usually very careful compiler, has confounded the 2nd and 4th Earl of Chesterfield in his *Literary Landmarks of London*.



4th or "Great" Earl, whose epistles to his son, inculcating, as Johnson (not in this connection, a sound critic perhaps) bluntly said, "The manners of a dancing-master and the morals of a whore," whose prowess in this direction is best known.

Another notable resident of this period was Lord Ashley, who was here in 1662; and yet another that Sir Francis Kynaston whose academy, we have seen, was in Bedfordbury, and who was living on the west side of the street in 1637. I may here mention that another man of the same name was to be found here at this period, namely Edward (Dick) Kynaston, who is remembered as being the first male impersonator of female characters on the stage. It was to him that Davenant is supposed to have referred, when, on Charles II expressing annoyance at being kept waiting for the beginning of a play, he explained that the performance would commence as soon as the queen was shaved. Pepys, who saw him first on August 18th, 1660, describes him then as a boy who "made the loveliest lady that I ever saw in my life." After the play the Diarist was introduced by Captain Ferrers to the young actor, who subsequently accompanied the party to a neighbouring tavern. It seems probable that the two Kynastons, Sir Francis and Edward, were related, otherwise it is a coincidence that both should have lived in the same thoroughfare. Kynaston the actor remained on the stage till the end of William III's reign, but had then long since given up female parts. He died in 1712; and it was towards the end of his life that he took up his residence in Bedford Street, in the house of his son, who was one of those carrying on business as mercers, to whom Strype refers.

It has been generally stated that Chief Justice Richardson, that humorous legal luminary of whom a characteristic *repartee* is given by Thoms, in his *Anecdotes and Traditions*,<sup>1</sup> once lived in this street, and No. 15 has

<sup>1</sup> A prisoner being tried by him, suddenly threw a brickbat at him, but threw it a little too high and thus missed the judge. "If I had been an *upright* judge, I had been slain," was Richardson's comment.

been actually pointed out as being on the site of his place of abode. As, however, Richardson died in 1635, either Bedford Street must have been formed earlier than 1637 (the date first inserted in Rate Books), or there must be some error with regard to the attribution of him as a one-time resident.

As in most of the streets in this area, Art has had several representatives here. One of these was an early comer, for we find Remigius Van Limput, now chiefly remembered as the purchaser of Vandyck's equestrian portrait of Charles I (now at Windsor), which he bought at the sale of the Royal possessions after the King's execution, and which he was forced to give up, at the Restoration, rather than as a specially successful painter, residing in Bedford Street, from 1645 onwards.

The other artist, in this case a famous one, who lived here, was John Hoskins, the excellent miniature painter of Charles I's reign, and the master of the still greater Samuel Cooper. Hoskins died on February 22nd, 1664; and another Hoskins, Peter, is recorded as being buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden, on July 1st, 1681; this Peter being in all probability the son of John.

During the eighteenth century, in addition to the mercers and such-like commercial people who had established themselves in Bedford Street, there were certain other residents whose names are remembered for a variety of reasons. Thomas Sheridan I have already noted as being one of these; another was James Quin, the actor and sometime rival of Garrick, on whose undoubted pre-eminence in his art and the more marked favour of the public shown to the new man, he retired from the stage in 1751, indeed, during the period, 1749-52, in which he was an inhabitant of Bedford Street. The house he occupied was rated at £42 a year. Quin had earlier, 1738, occupied lodgings in this street, over a druggist's shop which bore the sign of the "Sun." Another histrionic resident here was John Edwin, the comedian. His house was on the west side of the street; it is marked No. 17 in Horwood's plan, and had a direct view down Henrietta Street, as had Thomas Sheridan's. Here the actor died in October 1790, and was buried by

torchlight, in the presence of many friends, in the neighbouring church of St. Paul's.

To close the artistic associations of Bedford Street, I may note that it was in a house here that Benjamin West painted his first picture after his arrival in England in 1763 ; while Richard Wilson, the Father of English Landscape Painting, was wont to affect a tavern here, called the " Constitution," in company with his friend Mortimer, the painter, and Dr. Arne, on whose strange countenance he was for ever making jokes, much to the annoyance of the musician. By the way the " Constitution " survived into the 'seventies of the last century, occupying the premises numbered 32 in the street. Its sign, representing Church and State, bore pictures of Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall ; while its excellent fare and " peerless punch " are spoken of with gusto, by the writer of the *Epicures' Almanack* for 1815.

Among other one-time residents in this thoroughfare was a certain German doctor, James Tilbrough, who occupied a house with the sign of the Peacock. In an advertisement issued by this practitioner, it is stated that " you shall see at night two candles burning within one of the chambers before the balcony," as an indication of his whereabouts ; while Humphrey Wanley, the antiquary, occupied a house at the corner of Bedford and Chandos Streets, known as the Riding Hood House. Clay, who first made those tea-trays of papier mâché, which are now among " collected " objects, trays whose subjects were originally often painted by well-known artists, although in course of time they went off sadly, also had his headquarters here and made a fortune by his invention ; while at least one publisher is recorded as having graced the street, in the person of William Sheares, junior, whose imprint may occasionally be found on seventeenth-century books. J. H. Burn, in his *Catalogue of Trade Tokens*, gives one Samuel Hoare as issuing one from the Crossed Keys, here ; while Akerman, in addition to this, notes those of Thomas Lathwell, with the representation of a man dipping candles ; Christopher Seward, a halfpenny inscribed with three birds and the date 1664 ; and an anonymous trader at



the Sugar Loaf, in the street. A shop bill preserved in the Banks Collection also gives the Three Crowns as the sign of a laceman at No. 26. The original house was demolished in 1875, but the business was carried on long after that in rebuilt premises.

A once well-known coffee house in Bedford Street was Wildman's, where John Wilkes's adherents were wont to foregather and which is preserved by name, in this connection, in Churchill's *The Candidate*. Apparently, Wildman's was one of *the* places to be visited during those days, for Walpole tells Lord Hertford, that M. de Beaumont, a well-known French barrister, remembered for his defence of the Calas family befriended by Voltaire, being on a visit to this country, and determined to see everything worth seeing, had among other diversions dined at Wildman's.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another tavern here was the "Half-Moon" where, on July 1st, 1655, two men, Corbit and Hill by name, were fined £1 for drinking on the Lord's Day! An advertisement indicates that this hostelry was in existence in 1742, and it probably had a much longer life, in spite of its having come under the authorities' eyes, as a place where the Dora of the day was flouted, and toasted.

#### BEDFORD COURT

In this little backwater from the west side of Bedford Street, a few shops congregated. There was, for instance, the "Star" where coffee, tea, and chocolate were sold; and Robert Tate was dispensing green tea here in 1709, although it has been generally supposed that that luxury did not come into general use till half a dozen years later. In the Court was also a White's Coffee House, an advertisement of which is dated 1741, and a Cæsar's Head which was the sign of one William Sare, a bookseller, who issued a catalogue in the following year.

<sup>1</sup> I am bound to state that in a footnote to her great edition of Walpole's Letters, Mrs. Paget Toynbee states that this coffee-house was in Albemarle Street, and certainly a Wildman did have a tavern there where an opposition club, called "The Coterie," founded in 1763, met.

## CHAPTER V

### KING STREET AND HENRIETTA STREET

WHEN one is investigating a neighbourhood so complicated by large thoroughfares, cross streets, and innumerable courts and alleys as is Covent Garden and its purlieus, it is difficult to select the most convenient way of perambulating it. At present I have dealt with the thoroughfares and by-ways on the west of the Market, between it and St. Martin's Lane ; and Bedford Street was the last artery to be considered. But there are three streets running eastward out of Bedford Street, and with these I propose to deal in this chapter, although one of them is rather to the south than the west of our focal point. The thoroughfares whose history and romance I want now to bring before the reader are King Street, Henrietta Street, and Maiden Lane.

#### KING STREET

King Street is important for two reasons, for not only was it one of the first to be formed on the developed estate of the Russells, but it contains the one decorative mansion which has survived from early days in this part of London. It was laid out in 1637, or perhaps rather earlier, that year being the first in which it is mentioned in the Rate Books, and was named after King Charles I.

If you look at Hollar's "View of the Piazza," you will see some of the houses on the north-east side of the street as they appeared in their original form, as well as the considerable *Pavillon*, as the French would term it, standing opposite them, and flanking the low wall on the north side of St. Paul's Church. This etching was probably executed about 1640, or only two or three

years after King Street had been formed ; and as Professor Hind, in his masterly work on Hollar, remarks, it gives an earlier view of this area than that shown in the artist's Bird's-Eye Plan of the West Central District, this being evidenced by the fact that in the latter the central square is shown completely fenced in, whereas in this earlier one it is seen to be only guarded by wooden posts.

Strype includes King Street, together with Henrietta Street and Bedford Street, as being a thoroughfare largely affected after the Great Fire by eminent tradesmen ; but before then men eminent in other directions lived here. One of the earliest of these was Speaker Lenthall, who is known to have been occupying a house here on the site of which No. 27, the headquarters of the Westminster Fire Insurance Company (started in 1717), now stands. When exactly Lenthall came here is doubtful, but he appears to have remained till the year 1646, when he moved to Goring House (where Buckingham Palace now is) in consequence of that mansion then being allocated as the official home of the Speaker on July 23rd of that year.

The outstanding feature of King Street, linking it up with its earliest days, is the imposing mansion now occupied by the National Sporting Club, which has a long and extraordinarily interesting history. This house stands at the west end of the Great Piazza and adjoins the east end of King Street, and I include it in the account of this thoroughfare because it seems to belong as much to it as it does to the square on which it faces ; and because it is actually numbered 43 King Street, which is a better reason still.

It was doubtless one of Inigo Jones's creations, the pillars and capitals and the rusticated lower portions being quite in his style, but changes in the form of the windows and so forth have helped to obliterate the essential hall-mark of that great architect. There is a certain floridity (if I may coin a word, not inappropriate in this neighbourhood) about the frontage which strikes me as being more in the manner of that Captain Wynde who designed Buckingham House, and perhaps old



Harrington House, in Craig's Court, than of the greater man. However that may be, this mansion, which seldom seems to have had a definite name, is the principal architectural feature in Covent Garden ; and its successive occupiers are as notable and interesting.

The first of them appears to have been William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, the Scotch statesman and poet, who was created an Earl in 1633. In 1621 he received a grant of Nova Scotia, but transferred his rights to De la Tour nine years later. In 1626 he was appointed Secretary of State for Scotland, and he died in London, presumably at his house in Covent Garden, on September 12th, 1640. Considering that this neighbourhood has been so closely connected with literary and artistic people, it is appropriate that one of its earliest residents should have himself been a poet, Stirling's claims to the title being based on his *Monarchicke Tragedies* (1603-7) ; his *Parænesis to the Prince* (1604) ; his *Doomesday* ; and other less ambitious works.

The next occupant was Thomas Killigrew, the English dramatist, and a devoted Royalist, as well as one of our most inveterate theatre builders. It is hardly necessary to say more about a man who bulks so largely in the theatrical life of his day, who was a boon companion of the Merry Monarch (Rochester once boxed his ears in the Royal presence, to the scandal of Mr. Pepys), and whose name frequently occurs in the Diary. Killigrew had apartments in Whitehall after he left King Street, and there he died in 1683.

To him succeeded in the Covent Garden house Sir Kenelm Digby, who, according to Aubrey, "lived in the last faire house westward in the north Portico of Covent Garden, where my lord Denzill Holles lived since." Aubrey states that Digby had a laboratory here, and thinks that he died here. It is known that behind the premises, at this time, was a piece of ground called in the neighbourhood, "Digby's Garden," to which I shall have occasion to refer later. Digby's political sentiments were very alien from those of his father, the Sir Everard Digby of the Gunpowder Plot, for he was banished for supporting the Royal cause, and later became

Chancellor to Queen Henrietta Maria, a post he retained till after the Restoration. But he is, of course, chiefly known as a natural philosopher and student of occultism, and for an interesting diary which was subsequently published. He died in 1665, a year before the next illustrious tenant came to his old house. This was Denzil Holles, who had at an earlier date (1644) been residing elsewhere in the Piazza, but who began to occupy Killigrew's old home in 1666. Holles was a son of the Earl of Clare and brother-in-law of Lord Strafford. But his political sympathies were very alien from those of his latter relative, and he was one of those, it will be remembered, who forcibly held the Speaker in the Chair when that official attempted to adjourn the House at the King's bidding on March 2nd, 1629. He was subsequently sent to the Tower and heavily fined, but Parliament voted him £5000 as a set-off for this imprisonment. He was one of the Five Members impeached by Charles in 1642; just as, having modified his views, he was five years later impeached by the Army. On this he fled to France, and in 1648 was expelled from Parliament. He rounded off an adventurous and varied career (he had fought at Edgehill against the King) by being created a peer on the Restoration, and representing his Sovereign in Paris as English Ambassador there from 1663-6. He died on February 17th, 1679, in his eightieth year. It seems probable that his occupancy of the Covent Garden house took place after he had given up his public duties.<sup>1</sup>

Another resident in this historic house was Sir Henry Vane. As, however, he is said by Cunningham to have lived here in 1647, he must have preceded Holles. For even had the latter been here during his earlier life, and the house occupied by more than one tenant, one cannot imagine the Holles and Harry Vane of those days consenting to abide under the same roof, ample as that roof undoubtedly was.

Sir Harry Vane was one of the few whom the clemency of Charles II did not reach, and he was executed in

<sup>1</sup> We have seen him contributing to the adornment of the Central Square, in 1669.

1662, being then fifty years of age. It must have been when living in King Street that Vane voted against the famous Pride's Purge. But the man chiefly identified with the house, because he not only greatly altered, but largely rebuilt it, was Edward Russell, afterwards created Earl of Orford, the English admiral who, with Rooke, defeated the French fleet at the Battle of La Hogue. A tablet on the front of the building records his occupancy.

When he took the place and reconstructed it, this frontage was supposed to have been altered into the resemblance of the hull of a man-of-war, and it is a fact that the staircase was formed from wood taken from the *Britannia*, the ship commanded by Admiral Russell at La Hogue. Lord Orford, who was an attendant at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and paid ten shillings yearly for his pew in the gallery, died in this house on November 26th, 1727, aged seventy-four. He had been created Earl of Orford in 1697, and his reason for selecting Covent Garden as a residence may well have been the fact that in 1691 he had married Lady Mary Russell, third daughter of William, 1st Duke of Bedford, she being his cousin. As he left no children the title became extinct, till it was revived, in 1742, in favour of Sir Robert Walpole, in connection with whom it is best known.

When those meetings of certain important members of the House of Commons, organised by the Whig Junto, were held, Macaulay tells us that some of them took place at the "Rose"; but that the more select ones foregathered at Russell's house in Covent Garden. These meetings inaugurated what were later to be known as Cabinet Councils, and there is, therefore, good ground for supposing that the first Cabinet Council was held in the house which is still in existence and where meetings of a very different character are now the fashion.

On Lord Orford's death his house was taken by Thomas, Lord Archer, who was also a relation of the Russells, through the marriage of his father with Catherine Tipping, Lord Orford's grand-niece.<sup>1</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Burke, however, says it was Lord Orford's sister whom Archer married.



himself (being the second Baron of the revived ancient peerage) married, in 1761, Sarah, the elder daughter of James West, M.P. for Alscot, a well-known bibliographer, who subsequently inherited the Covent Garden mansion, and lived there and died (in 1772) amidst the splendid library he had gathered together, a collection, by the way, which occupied six weeks in its disposal, although many of the books went for the proverbial old song. Besides printed books, West had collected many rare manuscripts, and these were purchased by Lord Lansdowne. Prints and original drawings, coins and medals and so forth were also among the property of this snapper-up of anything that was rare or curious ; and the rooms of his house were filled with his accumulations. After his death the place was converted into an hotel by one David Low in 1774, and it is said by Walpole to have been the first *Hotel Garni* to be established in London.<sup>1</sup>

This was the beginning of a succession of different proprietors, for later the place was known as the Grand Hotel, then as Froome's, Hudson's, Richardson's, and Joy's. Low had been a hairdresser in Southampton Street, and like many who rush into hotel management without a proper training for that complicated business, he ruined himself over the venture. Among other forms of advertising his hostelry, he is said to have had gold, silver, and copper medals struck for distribution among his guests : the gold were bestowed on royalty, the silver on the nobility, and the copper on the mere mass. The "guinea stamp" indeed !

After Low's departure the house was taken by a man who had had some experience in this direction, although not exactly of the same character. This was one Froome, who had been the proprietor of the White Hart, in Long Acre, the morals of which were of a very free and easy kind. But Froome, apparently yearning for the sweets of respectability, after having made money out of vice, carried on his new hotel on most proper lines. After

<sup>1</sup> This is stated, by Wheatley, to be in a letter from Walpole to Mann, dated March 11th, 1776, but this particular letter does not appear in Mrs. Toynbee's collection.

him came a Mrs. Hudson, who advertised the fact that she had stabling accommodation for one hundred *noble-men* and horses ! Richardson, the next proprietor, seems to have left no mark, not even a malapropic one, nor does his successor Joy, although in his time the place must have been well patronised, judging from the fact that it was then known as the "Star" dining and coffee house, from the number of its notable frequenters. Dukes were then as plentiful here as the fare provided by Joy, and it is said that on more than one occasion no fewer than nine were to be seen assembled here.

Following Joy came W. C. Evans, the comedian of Covent Garden Theatre, with whose name the house was for so long identified ; even to-day the word Evans's evoking pleasant memories among the older stagers.

Under Evans's management the place had a long and successful career. It was known in its day to everyone, and is now dimly remembered by many. Thackeray, who knew it well, is supposed to have adumbrated it as the Cave of Harmony, where on a famous occasion, Colonel Newcome raised his voice in melody and his cane in righteous anger against Costigan ; that uplifted cane which "had somehow fallen on the back of every man in the room."

As in the case of many London taverns, Evans's was the temporary home of certain clubs which possessed no house of their own. Thus it was that the Savage Club was once accommodated here in a room on the left of the entrance hall, before coming to anchor in the Adelphi.

In 1844 Evans gave up his hotel to the still remembered rather eccentric "Paddy" Green, and died just ten years later. Under Green the new music-hall was built here in 1856 ; and that proprietor carried on the place successfully till his death in 1874. There is an interesting reference to Evans's in *Once a Week* for 1867, and as it records certain changes that had taken place here before that period, I give it *in extenso*, premising that considerable structural alterations had been made to the façade of the building in 1850 :

"About twenty years ago the list of metropolitan concert-rooms was headed by 'The Cyder Cellars' and 'Evans's.' The entertainments to be found in such places were not very select; but while the former has disappeared altogether, the latter has been altered and purged. The surviving establishment, half supper-room and half music-hall, and one of the 'lions of London,' is situated at the western extremity of Covent Garden. It is subject to peculiar and stringent regulations. Ladies are not admitted, except on giving their names and addresses, and then only enjoy the privilege of watching the proceedings from behind a screen. The whole of the performances are sustained by the male sex, and an efficient choir of men and boys sing glees, ballads, madrigals, and selections from operas, the accompaniments being supplied on the piano and harmonium. . . . The new hall, one of the most elaborately ornamented in London, was erected from designs by Mr. Finch Hill. Its proportions are certainly fine, and the decorations cost about £5000. On the occasion of our last visit to 'Evans's,' we heard standard music, English, German, and Italian, performed with admirable spirit, precision, and delicacy. The performances commence at eight o'clock; and we recommend 'Evans's' to steady young men who admire a high class of music, see no harm in a good supper, but avoid theatres and the ordinary run of music-halls. The so-called *café* is a spacious room supported by pillars, and hung round with portraits of actresses. Previous to the erection of the new hall, the chamber thus adorned was used as a singing-room."

From this extract it will be seen how far Evans's had travelled from the days when Captain Costigan bawled out his drunken obscenities amid an atmosphere of beer, spirits, and smoke.<sup>1</sup>

When Tallis, during the first years of Queen Victoria's reign, produced his remarkable series of elevations of

<sup>1</sup> In 1855-6, there was published a selection of songs, etc., specially printed for the use of "gentlemen visiting Evans's Supper Rooms." It was apparently issued in order that frequenters might study it and be ready to take part in the choruses.



the chief London thoroughfares, and included in them a section devoted to King Street and New Street, he gave as one of the vignettes accompanying the elevations, a representation of "Evans's" as it appeared in those days, and as it practically is to-day as the home of the National Sporting Club, remarking in his text that he had chosen for this purpose Evans's Grand Hotel, "which," he adds, "for architectural design, accommodation, etc., stands unrivalled."

The concert-room here was erected on the site of the garden (Digby's garden) at the back where mushrooms and cucumbers grew in great perfection, in the reign of George III ; the gallery reserved for ladies, and referred to in the extract given above, is said to occupy part of the site on which stood a small cottage inhabited occasionally by the Kemble family during the height of their fame at Covent Garden Theatre, and here Fanny Kemble is reported to have been born.

"Evans's" finally ceased to exist in 1880, and it was shortly after this that the house, together with the adjoining premises, became the headquarters of the Falstaff Club, an institution, as its name indicates, of a theatrical and dramatic character somewhat analogous to the Garrick. In 1889, it housed yet another club, the New, but one of short duration ; and subsequently, as I have said, it blossomed forth as the National Sporting Club, an institution of too world-renowned a character to need any further description here, especially as its annals have been comprehensively compiled and issued in a volume specially allocated to the subject, by Mr. Bettinson.

King Street can boast of other musical memories than those associated with the concerts at "Evans's," for in the street, at the sign of the Two Crowns and Cushions, according to an advertisement in the *Post Bag* for May 1712, Mr. Arne carried on his business as an upholsterer, and here his famous son, the future Dr. Arne, as well as that great musician's sister, the actress who became the wife of Theophilus Cibber (the son of Colley), were born, the former on March 12th, 1710, the latter in February 1714.

Another theatrical association is provided by the birth in King Street of James Quin, which occurred on February 24th, 1693 ; an association maintained by the presence here during the years 1743-5 of David Garrick, who was at that time living at Mr. West's, a cabinet maker, here. "A charming lodging," William Windham, in a letter to Peter Garrick, calls it ; while George Frederick Cooke, the tragedian, noted for his impersonations of Richard III and Iago, was lodging in King Street in the year 1895.

It is interesting in this connection to remember that the Garrick Club had its first home at No. 35 in this thoroughfare. This was the Garrick—"the dear little G"—of Thackeray, who, of course, never knew the club in its splendid present premises in Garrick Street. Tallis's elevation shows No. 35 as it was *circa* 1839, some eight years after the club had been established here for the avowed purpose "of bringing together the patrons of the drama and its professors, and also for offering literary men a rendezvous." This house had formerly been a family hotel, and having been altered and rendered tolerably commodious, it served its purpose as a club-house until the increased number of members made it inadequate, and in 1864 the Garrick moved to its present club-house.

It seems fairly probable that the following general description of Covent Garden by Thackeray was written by him in the club he loved so well and of which he is the outstanding memory :

"The two great national theatres on one side, a churchyard full of mouldy but undying celebrities on the other ; a fringe of houses studded in every part with anecdote and history ; an arcade, often more gloomy and deserted than a cathedral aisle ; a rich cluster of brown old taverns—one of them filled with the counterfeit presentments of many actors long since silent who scowl or smile once more from the canvas upon the grandsons of their dead admirers<sup>1</sup> ; a something in the

<sup>1</sup> Probably referring to the wonderful theatrical portrait gallery belonging to the Garrick.

air which breathes of old books, old pictures, old painters, and old authors ; a place beyond all other places one would choose in which to hear the chimes at midnight ; a crystal palace—the representative of the present—which peeps timidly from a corner upon many things in the past ; a withered bank, that has been sucked dry by a felonious clerk ; a squat building, with a hundred columns and chapel-looking fronts, which always stand knee-deep in baskets, flowers, and scattered vegetables ; a common centre into which Nature showers her choicest gifts, and where the kindly fruits of the earth often nearly choke the narrow thoroughfares ; a population that never seems to sleep, and that does all in its power to prevent others sleeping ; a place where the very latest suppers and the earliest breakfasts jostle each other on the footways—such is Covent Garden Market, with some of its surrounding features.”

The original home of the Garrick Club at No. 35 King Street was the house in which a now forgotten, but once popular comedian, William Thomas Lewis, had once lived, and where in all probability, although I cannot vouch for the fact, he died in 1811, aged sixty-three. He “created” a number of parts which are theatrical classics, such as Doricourt in *The Belle’s Stratagem* and that difficult one, Falkland in *The Rivals*.

Later Lewis’s home became an hotel conducted by Probatt, which is found mentioned in *The Picture of London* for 1818.

Three doors eastward from the old Garrick Club premises are to-day the well-known Auction Rooms of the late Mr. J. C. Stevens, which are still carried on by his successors. This firm is an old one, for it was established in 1776, and had been preceded in these rooms by the well-known Mr. Samuel Paterson, the auctioneer who was the first to offer books for sale singly, and not in lots as had before been customary. Paterson came to Covent Garden from Essex Street where he occupied a house formerly the residence of Sir Orlando Bridgeman. He was originally a stay-maker, but was an exceedingly well-read man, and a friend of Dr. Johnson,



who stood godfather to his youngest son. Indeed his immersion in books seems to have somewhat interfered with his successful selling of them, and he was obviously more in his proper environment when he became, later, librarian to Lord Lansdowne. J. T. Smith, who allots some pages in his *Nollekens and His Times* to Paterson, of whom he was a close friend, describes attending his funeral in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

After Paterson gave up No. 38 King Street, it was taken by Messrs. King, Collins, and Chapman, who continued to sell literary property here during the daytime, but occasionally let the rooms for other purposes during the evening. The John Collins of the firm had once been an actor, and here he gave what he called his *Evening Brush*, otherwise a *mélange* of reminiscences and anecdotes concerning the notable people he had met in his then remote earlier days. It was, too, in these rooms that Charles Dibdin began his entertainment called *London Amusements*. One of the items was the famous song *Poor Jack*, and so popular was this that it was not only regularly and vociferously encored when given, but copies could hardly be printed quickly enough to meet the demand for them. This being so, Dibdin—I may as well give J. T. Smith's actual words—"Dibdin actually hired a stall, which then stood close to the Piazza in Russell Street, such as was formerly called a 'by-stander,' and similar to those erected in front of the Royal Exchange for the sale of newspapers, being large enough for Wood, his man, to stand in to deliver out the songs. The crowd and scramble to get them, even wet from the press, was such, that I have seen persons fight for their turn."

Among earlier residents in King Street two poets are included. One of these was Nicholas Rowe, who died in a house here on December 16th, 1718. Rowe had been made Poet Laureate four years earlier, but is better remembered for his dramatic works, *Jane Shore* and the rest, and his edition of Shakespeare's works than for his purely poetical output. The other poet, in this case one of our greatest, Coleridge, lodged here from 1799 till 1802, during which period he was engaged in

contributing to the pages of *The Morning Post* and occasionally visiting Keswick.

In the *Tatler* for July 15th, 1710, is a long account of certain North American Chiefs, or Indian Kings, as the *Spectator* calls them, who had come over to this country in order to enlist England's help against the French. Those who are interested in a description of these envoys and wish to acquaint themselves with their names, which, by the way, Leigh Hunt compared with "a set of yawns and sneezes," are referred to the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* or to Leigh Hunt's *The Town*, in which the former account is reprinted. What interests us here about these gentry is the inference by the writer of the notice in question, that, while they continued in London, they were lodged in a handsome apartment in King Street, which appears to have been the house of Mr. Arne, the upholsterer at the "Two Crowns and Cushions," to which reference has already been made. Two years later this house was burned to the ground together with several others, the loss being computed at no less than £10,000.

In Tallis's Directory attached to his elevation of this thoroughfare are a few names which deserve to be recorded, although he does not mention the tavern with the sign of the Essex Serpent which exists on the south side at No. 6, a house then run as a wine vault by one Turpin.<sup>1</sup> For instance there were in those days (*circa* 1839) several booksellers here, Daniell at No. 2, Lilly at No. 19, and Setchel at No. 23. Jones's Hotel and Coffee House occupied Nos. 3 and 4, Heath the engraver at No. 9, and W. Read, another engraver, at No. 37; while Morris and Eanson and Beaman were surgeons living respectively at No. 22 and No. 32. As most people know, Messrs. Debenham and Storr's Auction Rooms are at No. 26, the north-west corner of the street, in

<sup>1</sup> The sign had reference to the famous Saffron Walden winged serpent, a tract about which, in the British Museum, is entitled: 342. THE FLYING SERPENT; or, Strange News out of Essex, being a true Relation to a Monstrous Serpent which hath divers times been seen at a Parish called Henham-on-the-Mount, within four Miles of Saffron Walden. *With cut representing the Monster.* Printed and Sold by Peter Lillicrap, 1669.

which Messrs. Veritys the electricians and Messrs. Barr the seed-merchants have also their premises.

What is gambroon? I confess to abysmal ignorance. I ask because I find that at No. 28 Messrs. Payne and Co. were there installed in what they called Fox's Patent Gambroon Warehouse. Has it anything to do with mahogany? If so there is a good reason for its presence in King Street, for it was here that that wood was first used for interior decoration. And it came about in this way, as recorded by Mr. Macmicheal :

" Dr. Gibbons, an eminent physician of the time, was building a house in King Street, when his brother, a West Indian captain, brought over some mahogany as ballast, and thinking the wood might be of service to his brother, the doctor, he sent him a quantity of it ; but the carpenters finding it too hard to work, it was laid aside. Soon after this, Mrs. Gibbons wanting a candle-box, the doctor called on his cabinet maker in Long Acre, and asked him to make one of some wood that lay in his garden. He complained, however, that it was too hard for his tools, and the doctor said he must get stronger tools. The box was made and approved, so that the doctor had a bureau made of the same wood ; the fine colour and polish were so pleasing that he invited his friends to come and see the bureau ; and among them was the Duchess of Buckingham, through whose patronage of it the wood came into general use."

Many of the doors in King Street were subsequently made of this material, and were to be seen there well into Queen Victoria's reign.<sup>1</sup>

Among the old signs in King Street is recorded the " Golden Cup," which indicated the premises (later No. 3) of one Wilson, who combined rather oddly the businesses of a hosier and a snuff-dealer ; while a token bearing the emblem of the " White Bear," here was issued in the seventeenth century. Two other tokens

<sup>1</sup> In the Westminster Public Library is a water-colour showing certain houses in that part of King Street which were demolished in 1864, when Garrick Street was formed.



emanating from tradesmen in this street are given by Akerman. One of these bearing the sign of a stag was issued by Thomas Sherwood ; the other bears the representation of a fox entering a gateway, and was the token of one Anthony Smith.

Mr. Heal in his valuable book on Tradesmen's Cards, records one of Francis Noble at his Circulating Library at Otway's Head in King Street, *circa* 1740-50. It is the work of Ravenet, and shows the fine and spacious interior of Noble's shop.

King Street is linked up with our literature, for here it was that Clarissa Harlowe, under the assumed name of Mrs. Rachel Clark, hid from Lovelace at the house of Mr. Smith who sold gloves there, although that merchant's name is not to be found in any directory.

### HENRIETTA STREET

As King Street was named after Charles I, so its companion thoroughfare, Henrietta Street, was called after that Monarch's consort. It is said to have been fashionable during the earlier half of the seventeenth century (it was formed in 1637), but I am bound to say that fewer illustrious ones appear to have lived here than in King Street. It is interesting as showing relative ideas of spaciousness, to find Hatton, in his *New View of London*, published in 1708, describing it as being "very broad."

Although this thoroughfare cannot boast so many notable residents as King Street, nor any house comparable with the great one inhabited by Lord Orford, it has one claim to remembrance greater even than its companion street can boast, for in it once lived Lord Strafford, in the year (1640) in which he was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. His house was on the south side, but it is impossible to say more precisely where it stood. This side of the street seems to have been the favourite residential one, although we can see by Hollar's Bird's-eye View that houses of quite impressive character had arisen opposite. As, however, their backs overlooked the burial ground of St. Paul's Church, there was

good reason for their being less popular than those on the opposite side of the thoroughfare. One resident on the south side, Sir Lewis Dives, who came here in 1637, was one of the earliest, if not actually the earliest, householder here.

As a matter of fact what do stand out in the annals of Henrietta Street are its artistic associations. These began early in its career, for Samuel Cooper, the famous miniature painter, was living here in 1645, the year in which a rate was made for meeting certain church expenses ; and he was still here when Pepys came to see him in 1668, as thus recorded in the Diary :

“ March 30. By coach to Common (Covent) Garden Coffee-house, where by appointment I was to meet Harris ; which I did, and also Mr. Cooper, the great painter, and Mr. Hales : and thence presently to Mr. Cooper’s house, to see some of his work, which is all in little, but so excellent as, though I must confess I do think the colouring of the flesh to be a little forced, yet the painting is so extraordinary, as I do never expect to see the like again.” Among the portraits which Cooper showed his visitor were portraits of Miss Stewart (later the Duchess of Richmond) “ before her having the small-pox ” ; and Cromwell’s famous picture with the wart all complete ; as well as portraits of Arlington, Ashley, and others. One that specially struck Pepys was that of Mr. Swinfen, secretary to Lord Manchester and once M.P. for Tamworth, taken together, in a double piece, with Richard Cooling, the Lord Chamberlain’s secretary : “ done so admirably as I never saw any thing ” is Pepys’s comment. One does not suppose that Cooper himself regarded it so complacently, for he was not only never paid for it, but at Swinfen’s death (in debt) he himself bought it back for £25, only £5 less than he was to have received for it.

These beautiful miniatures so wrought on Pepys that, as he himself says, “ being infinitely satisfied with this sight . . . I resolved that my wife shall be drawn by him when she comes out of the country.” Accordingly on the following July 1st we find him calling again on Cooper to know when his wife shall come and sit for





*After Revlandson*

BOW STREET POLICE COURT IN THE TIME OF SIR JOHN FIELDING





her picture. This appears to have been fixed for the 6th, when we find Mrs. Pepys there with Hewer and Deb, Pepys himself joining them later. Another sitting took place on the 10th, and is thus recorded in the Diary : "To Cooper's ; and there find my wife and W. Hewer and Deb, sitting, and painting ; and here he do work finely, though I fear it will not be so like as I expected : but now I understand his great skill in musick, his playing and setting to the French lute most excellently ; and he speaks French, and indeed is an excellent man."

On the 19th he had Cooper with others, Butler (of the *Hudibras* which Pepys could not relish, try as he would) among them, at his own house ; and on the 25th he again goes to Henrietta Street, and finds the portrait "go on, which will be very fine indeed." Finally on August 10th the last sitting took place, the Diarist being there and, indeed, spending the whole afternoon in Cooper's studio. The price of the portrait was £30, and the case for it came to £8 odd more. Pepys did not, after all, think the likeness exact, nor was he quite satisfied with the blue gown in which his wife was painted, but he sums up : that it is "a most rare piece of work, as to the painting," and he at once sent Cooper the money "that I might be out of his debt." It is sad that this particular miniature has not been traced, but no one, I think, can walk along Henrietta Street without mentally visualising the Secretary to the Admiralty on his way to the studio of the greatest of English miniaturists.

The relations between Pepys and Cooper went on smoother lines than those between Horace Walpole and another artist who lived in Henrietta Street ; for the famous engraver M'Ardell who resided at a house with the sign of the "Golden Ball," the house at the corner of Henrietta Street and Covent Garden Market, annoyed his fastidious patron very much on one occasion, as may be seen by the following extract from a letter written by Walpole to Grosvenor Bedford on May 9th, 1759 :

"I shall be much obliged if you will call as soon as you can at M'Ardell's in Henrietta Street, and take my

picture from him. I am extremely angry, for I heard he has told people of the print. If the plate is finished, be so good as to take it away, and all the impressions he has taken off, for I will not let him keep one. If it is not finished, I shall be most unwilling to leave the print with him. If he pretends he stays for the inscription, I will have nothing but these words, *Horace Walpole, youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford*. I must beg you will not leave it with him an hour, unless he locks it up, and denies to everybody there is any such thing. I am extremely provoked at him, and very sorry to give you so much trouble."

Yet another well-known engraver also lived in this street, in the person of Sir Robert Strange, whom Walpole describes (in a letter to Sir Horace Mann) as "a very first-rate artist, and by far our best." Strange was a confirmed Jacobite; so Walpole adds, "Pray countenance him, though you will not approve his politics." This was in 1760 when Strange was going to Italy. His residence in Henrietta Street, where he lived at the "Golden Head," is fixed at four years earlier, at the time when he was issuing his proposals for engraving by subscription three historical prints.<sup>1</sup> On his return from the Continent, Strange went to live in Castle Street, since obliterated by the Charing Cross Road, but he died at 52 Great Queen Street in 1792.

Nor does this exhaust the artistic associations of this thoroughfare, for here lived Samuel Scott, the English Canaletto, and it was in his drawing-room here that a club, consisting only of six members, was accustomed to meet. Of this club, another artist of the day, Marcellus Laroon, of whom something more anon, was the deputy chairman, the chairman being supposed (owing to a probable error of J. T. Smith in writing down the name) to have been Sir Robert Walpole, but who, as Mr. Wilfred Whitten, in his invaluable annotated edition of *Nollekens and His Times*, surmises, was more probably that statesman's eldest son, Sir Edward, a warm patron of Scott and the owner of his masterly picture of "Old London

<sup>1</sup> Wheatley, *London Past and Present*.



Bridge.” Smith says that Laroon made a most beautiful drawing of the members of this social club, which once belonged to James Deacon of James Street, Pimlico, who allowed Smith to make a tracing of it.

The members of the fraternity consisted of Sir Edward Walpole, Laroon, Mr. Martin, Secretary to the Board of Excise, who we are told lodged in Scott’s house, Mr. Robert Mann of the Customs House, Mr. Deacon, who was also in the Excise office, and Scott himself.

Captain Marcellus Laroon, who, as we shall see, lived in Bow Street, was a curious person who had served with Marlborough in the Netherlands and with Stanhope in Spain, and also under the latter in the 1715 Rising. He left the Army in 1732 and died fifty years later in his ninety-third year. Smith has left a long account of him in the biographical section of his book on Nollekens, but all that here concerns us is that he seems to have heard the chimes at midnight in the Covent Garden area oftener than most people, for Saunders Welch used to say that when his name was mentioned in the hearing of Fielding, the magistrate, the latter was wont to remark : “ I consider him and his friend Captain Montague, and their constant companion, Little Cazey, the link-boy, as the three most troublesome and difficult to manage of all my Bow Street visitors.”

Portraits of the three boon companions who gave Fielding trouble are introduced into a print by the French engraver Louis Pierre Boitard (he died in London, in 1758), entitled “The Covt. Garden Morning Frolick—Gaillardise du Commun Jardin,” published without the artist’s name. It is dated 1747, and as can be seen by anyone examining it, gives not merely a picture of the scene in which Laroon and his friends figured, but also an interesting architectural representation of the central square with St. Paul’s, the houses round (including Lord Orford’s), and the sundial. According to Smith’s description Laroon is here shown holding an artichoke on a stick over his shoulder, and pointing at the figure on the top of the sedan which represents Captain Montague. The sleeping female with-

in the chair was the then notorious Betty Careless, a well-known Covent Garden beauty (her name is introduced by Hogarth into the last scene of his *Rake's Progress*)<sup>1</sup> ; while Little Cazeys is seen with his link preceding the chairmen. Probably other then well-known characters are portrayed, such as the man with the hurdy-gurdy, but they have not been identified.

The artistic associations of Henrietta Street are rounded off by the fact that it was here, at Rawthmell's Coffee House, that the Society of Arts was established in 1754. Although founded here its meetings were held elsewhere, first in a circulating library in Crane Court, Fleet Street, then in Craig's Court, Charing Cross ; its present home in the Adelphi, specially built for it by the Adam brothers, being its fifth domicile.

At the time, 1756, when Sir Robert Strange was living at the "Golden Head" in Henrietta Street, one of the foremost actresses of the day was also residing in the thoroughfare. This was Kitty Clive, who in the March of that year is found advertising her benefit performance and giving Henrietta Street as her address ; and it was probably while here that she sat to Strange for his print of her as the Fine Lady in *Lethe*.

A link between the stage and literature in Henrietta Street is afforded by the one-time presence here of Thomas Southerne, the dramatist, who, it seems probable, resided for a time at least in Henrietta Street. William Oldys, in his notes to Langbaine's *English Dramatic Poets*, writes : "I remember him (Southerne), a grave and reserved old gentleman. He lived *near* Covent Garden, and used to frequent the evening prayers there (at St. Paul's Church), always neat and decently dressed, commonly in black, with his silver sword and silver locks ; but latterly he seemed to reside in Westminster." As a matter of fact Southerne died in Tothill Street, Westminster, in 1746, but he was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden, no doubt because of his one-time residence in the neighbourhood and his particular affection for that church.

<sup>1</sup> She was buried from the Poor House, at St. Paul's Church, on April 22nd, 1752.

A later resident here was Paul Whitehead, the poet, who died here in 1774. Whitehead (not, of course, to be confounded with his contemporary, William Whitehead, who succeeded Colley Cibber as Poet Laureate, and died, aged seventy, in 1785) is now chiefly remembered as an associate of Dashwood and Wilkes and Churchill and as a member of the Hell Fire Club, the meetings of which took place at Medmenham Abbey. For some not very clear reason, Whitehead became the constant butt of the last-named, and in his poems, *The Conference*, *The Candidate*, and *Independence*, Churchill gibbets his whilom boon companion in a gamut of vituperation ranging from "aged Paul" to "kept bard" and "disgrace of mankind"; while his well-known couplet about him has already been quoted in these pages. I have said so much about Paul Whitehead in a previous book,<sup>1</sup> that I need not repeat myself here. I cannot but think that Paul was not half so black as he was painted by one who delighted in laying about him with a literary bludgeon. He was no saint; he was but a fourth- or fifth-rate poet; but he possessed a genius for friendship and had many friends. His portrait is not that of an essentially bad, although it is rather obviously that of a weak, man. That portrait is by Gainsborough, and has something of the great painter's famous "Parish Clerk" about it—how satirical Churchill would have been on such a comparison! Towards the end of his life Whitehead lived at Twickenham, but he died in lodgings in Henrietta Street on December 30th, 1774, his body being buried at Teddington, and his heart, which he had bequeathed to Lord le Despencer (the Sir Francis Dashwood of his earlier association), in the curious mausoleum which that peer had caused to be erected at West Wycombe. By the way, the heart is said no longer to be there; some visitor having, as reported, carried it away. Garrick wrote Whitehead's epitaph, and in spite of the proverbial inaccuracy of lapidary inscriptions, Garrick's praise should outweigh Churchill's blame.

Three years after Whitehead's death another literary

<sup>1</sup> *Lives of the Rakes*, "The Hell-Fire Club," vol. 4.



person came to lodge in Henrietta Street—a very different person—no other, indeed, than Hannah More, who had arrived in London in 1774 and took lodgings here in 1777, before going to others in Gerrard Street, Soho. Her presence in Covent Garden was thus only temporary, but it is pleasant to think of her staying in the same street in which Kitty Clive had lived and Paul Whitehead had died.

Jesse in his *London* repeats an amusing anecdote, recorded by Hannah More, in a letter to one of her sisters, concerning an incident that occurred to her during her stay in Henrietta Street. It was on one of those occasions when an election was in progress, at which the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire and other ladies were wont to canvass for Fox, and afterwards from a window in Henrietta Street, amused themselves by watching the crowd below and the humours of a Westminster election.

“I had like,” she writes, “to have got into a fine scrape the other night. I was going to pass the evening at Mrs. Coles’s, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. I went in a chair. They carried me through Covent Garden. A number of people, as I went along, desired the men not to go through the Garden, as there were an hundred armed men, who suspected every chair man belonged to Brooks’s, and would fall upon us. In spite of my entreaties the men would have persisted, but a stranger, out of humanity, made them set me down, and the shrieks of the wounded, for there was a terrible battle, intimidated the chair men, who were at last prevailed upon to carry me another way. A vast number of people followed me, crying out, ‘It is Mrs. Fox : none but Mr. Fox’s wife would have dared to come into Covent Garden in a chair : she is going to canvass in the dark !’ Though not a little frightened I laughed heartily at this, but shall stir out in a chair no more for some time.”

But a more illustrious literary lady even than Hannah More can be claimed by Henrietta Street, as at least a temporary resident. This was Jane Austen, who in 1813 was living with her brother at No. 10. Austen himself was partner in a bank here at this time, and Mr. Cunningham in his *London* suggests that the premises of

this bank were below the rooms occupied by Austen and his illustrious sister. Two doors off at No. 8, Francis Maria Kelly, the actress, and the object of Charles Lamb's adoration, was living in 1819, and it was while here that she received Elia's written offer of marriage, an offer she rejected by return of messenger on July 20th of that year. At this time Miss Kelly had an engagement at the English Opera House (now the Lyceum) and Lamb was writing criticisms of her performances in the *Examiner*. Although in her reply she speaks of her affections being centred on *another*, Miss Kelly died unmarried at the age of ninety-two.

But Henrietta Street was far from being wholly residential. There were several taverns in it. Of these Rawthmell's has already been referred to as the place where the Society of Arts was inaugurated. Another was the "Castle," notable as being the spot where Sheridan fought his third duel with Captain Matthews in 1772, because of certain remarks made by the latter concerning the beautiful Miss Linley, Sheridan's future wife. Matthews was disarmed, but not before doing his adversary so much damage that it is said the sword ceased, for this reason, to be fashionable as a duelling instrument from that time, and was replaced by the pistol. The Sheridan-Matthews encounter had begun near the Ring in Hyde Park, but was interrupted by a crowd which gathered; then the combatants went to the Hercules' Pillars Tavern, at Hyde Park Corner, but were again unable to proceed owing to being disturbed; and so they finally proceeded to the "Castle" where they cut each other about to their heart's content.

The "Castle" is notable for another incident, for it was here that a young gallant of the period took off the shoe of a noted "toast," filled it with wine, and drank the contents to her health. After which the sodden shoe was handed to the cook of the establishment, one John Pierce, a noted *cuisinier* of the day, who made it into a ragout which was duly consumed by the lady's admirer and his friends.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another tavern here was one with the sign of the

<sup>1</sup> Larwood and Hotten's *History of Signboards*.

“Key,” which is known to have existed at one of the corners of the street, at the end of the seventeenth century. This may be identical with the “Cross Keys” to which the “Constitution” succeeded, and which was at 32 Bedford Street, in 1879. It was kept by Samuel Hoare, who issued a token from it, as before recorded under “Bedford Street.” In 1742, the following notice appeared in the *Daily Advertiser* for March 15th : “The Independent Electors of the City and Liberty of Westminster are desir’d to meet to-morrow at seven o’clock at the Cross Keys Tavern, the Corner of Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, on special affairs” ; from which it may be assumed that this tavern was one of some importance, although no other event of note appears to be associated with it.

Indeed the most outstanding of these social centres in this thoroughfare was the famous “Offley’s” at No. 23, noted for its Burton ale and for the size of its chops, which, in this respect, compared favourably with those provided by its great rival Bellamy’s. Offley, the proprietor, had originally been employed at the latter establishment ; and had probably heard, and taken to heart, the complaints of members of the House of Commons (Bellamy’s standing *clientèle*) as to the exiguous character of the chops at that eating-house.<sup>1</sup>

Timbs tells us that whereas the House of Commons’ chops were small and thin, those of Offley’s were thick and substantial, and were served with shredded shalots, and were warmed in gravy. The place in Henrietta Street was a favourite rendezvous for supper after the theatre, but there was also “excellent dining upstairs, with wines really worth drinking—all of a sort of Quakerly plainness, but solid comfort. The fast men came to the great room, where the *spécialité* was singing by amateurs on one evening of the week ; and to prevent the chorus waking the dead in their cerements in the adjoining churchyard, the coffee-room window was double.”<sup>2</sup> Here Francis Crew might have been heard

<sup>1</sup> Pitt’s last words, it will be remembered, are said to have been : “I think I could eat one of Bellamy’s chops.”

<sup>2</sup> Timbs : *Clubs and Club Life in London*.



warbling Moore's Irish melodies, and sometimes Offley himself would give his audience a rendering of one of Captain Morris's lyrics. Certain well-to-do tradesmen of the vicinity also patronised the place and gathered round the large circular table which was regarded by them as a privileged centre. In course of time the fame of Offley's declined ; mine host departed ; and the house was eventually closed. A descriptive account of it as it was in its prime, was contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany* for 1841, under the title of "Horæ Offleanæ." Apropos of this publication and Charles Dickens's connection with it, it is interesting to remember that Offley's was one of the great novelist's favourite resorts, as he said, because he always found there "a fine collection of old boys." It is likely enough that many a trait of character and human nature found its way into the novels from observations made at No. 23 Henrietta Street.

After Offley's had ceased, the premises were taken by the great publishing firm of Macmillan's, which later, however, migrated to Bedford Street.

Henrietta Street has been and still is notable as the headquarters of publishers. Opposite Offley's, old Bohn had his premises, just as his son, Henry J. Bohn, had in York Street (where he was succeeded by Messrs. George Bell and Co., now in Portugal Street). Here at No. 11 Dickens's name is kept green by the offices of *his* publishers, Messrs. Chapman and Hall ; No. 3 are Messrs. Gerald Duckworth and Co.'s, and at No. 30, Messrs. Williams and Norgate. The south-west corner premises are those of the well-known publishers, Messrs. Arthur Pearson and Co., at Nos. 16 to 18 ; while at No. 20, on the opposite side of the street, Mr. Peter Davies is a relatively new comer.

This side of the street was largely rebuilt when the London County and Westminster Bank opened here, at No. 34, their fine Covent Garden branch.<sup>1</sup> The Rectory House attached to St. Paul's Church is on the south side. To round up the associations of Henrietta Street, one

<sup>1</sup> The City of Westminster Library possesses a drawing entitled, "Demolition of Henrietta Street for the Site of the Hospital."

should not forget that Partridge the almanac maker, and special butt of Swift, is said to have lived both here and in King Street. It is known to most people how he foretold the death of the French king, whereupon Swift not only foretold *his* demise, but insisted that he *was* dead. Partridge vehemently denied the accusation ; and for a time the town was kept amused by the controversy, the details of which were hawked about the streets. The affair certainly killed Partridge as an almanac maker, for after it (1709) he ceased to issue his lucubrations, but he himself actually survived for another six years, dying in Salisbury Street, Strand, in 1715.

Another item of eighteenth-century intelligence connected with the thoroughfare is recorded in the *Daily Post* for July 1725, and is reprinted in Macmicheal's *Charing Cross* thus : " A Lady dress'd in yellow Damask, that spoke to a Gentleman in a Hackney Coach about 6 o'clock at Night on Saturday last in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, is requested to send a Letter directed for Mr. Jeffreys at Rochford's Coffee-house, Charing Cross, letting the said Mr. Jeffreys know where she may be heard of, when she will be inform'd of something much to her advantage. N.B. The Gentleman order'd the Coach to carry him to the Lodge in Hyde Park." It sounds a repetition of the Steele episode already recorded.

Among tradesmen once carrying on business in Henrietta Street, were a Mr. John Green, who is known to have been a goldsmith here in 1689 ; James Baughan, a shoemaker, at the sign of the " Angel " ; John Salt, a man's mercer, who died over his shop in 1736 ; George Pressey, a chandler, here later in the eighteenth century ; Daniel Mallory, a laceman, at the sign of the " Parrot " to which he came in 1729 ; while the " Burton Ale " house in this street, kept by one J. Field is presumed to be one of the earliest instances, if not the earliest, of an ale-house of this special character in London.

When Mr. Webster succeeded to the numismatist's business hitherto carried on by William Till at the premises formerly occupied by Tom's Coffee House in

Russell Street ; he subsequently removed to No. 6 Henrietta Street ; while two doors off, at No. 4, the late Charles Frohman opened his theatrical office in 1893 and introduced American management and plays to London. On previous visits to this country Frohman had occupied a room at the office of Messrs. Abbey, Shoeffel and Gran in this street.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *London*, by G. H. Cunningham.



## CHAPTER VI

### MAIDEN LANE AND STREETS ON THE SOUTH

**M**AIDEN LANE is to-day hardly an impressive thoroughfare. It is narrow and as its name denotes, is only in the nature of a subsidiary street. Even the early references to it in the Parish books merely describe it as being "behind the Bull Inn," a tavern in the Strand from which Bull Inn Court, linking up Maiden Lane with the main thoroughfare, takes its name. Hatton is not kinder to the lane, for he dismisses it with the curt remark that it is "against the end of Shandois Street which comes into Bedford Street."

And yet it has had a far more notable past than have many larger and more consequential thoroughfares, for it has been the residence of at least four outstanding personalities and the birth-place of one of them.

The origin of the name is obscure. Isaac Disraeli, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, states that it was so called from a statue of the Virgin which is said at one time to have adorned the corner of the street (as we see them so often on the Continent), on the same principle that the sign of the Maidenhead really stood for "Our Lady's Head." Stow, however, speaking of Maiden Lane in Aldersgate, refers to it as "Engaine Lane or Mayden Lane," and the former name is found variously spelt as "Englenelane," Ingenlane, and even (with a sort of prophetic insight) *Ing Lane*.<sup>1</sup> As the city namesake of our Maiden Lane had such an earlier and later alternative title, it seems reasonable to suppose that the same may have been the case with the west-end one.

To-day Maiden Lane links up Bedford Street with

<sup>1</sup> We find the word in an Essex town name, i.e. Colne Engaine.

Southampton Street, but in former times it was a *cul-de-sac*, the latter thoroughfare not having been formed till later, certainly not till after the latter part of the seventeenth century, as it does not appear in Morden and Lea's plan of 1682. But although only thus a subsidiary street, it was in what was then a fashionable neighbourhood, even if its actual houses were not comparable with those in such thoroughfares as King Street or Henrietta Street.

The first person of importance to be connected with Maiden Lane was Archbishop Sancroft who is known to have been lodging here in 1663, on the evidence of a letter addressed to him by the antiquary Dugdale, the superscription of which reads : "To my much honoured friend, Dr. Sancroft, Dean of York, at Mr. Clarke's house in Mayden Lane, neere Covent Garden." Sancroft had in this very year been appointed Dean of York ; in the following year he was made Dean of St. Paul's (so that his residence in what was, according to Stow, Ing Lane was not inappropriate) ; and he became Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1677, just eleven years before he was committed to the Tower with the six bishops, and sixteen years before his death. It is a regrettable fact that even so good a man as Sancroft did not escape calumny, and he was accused of being unduly intimate with one Mrs. Bembo, in Maiden Lane. The fact is only interesting as informing us of the presence in this street of a lady bearing this uncommon surname—one only otherwise connected in our minds with that of the great Italian cardinal and man of letters, of the sixteenth century.

Sancroft's sojourn here was doubtless but a temporary one, as was that of the other seventeenth-century notability who once lived here. This was Andrew Marvell, the poet and politician. Marvell on being appointed joint Latin Secretary with Milton, to Cromwell, came to London in 1657, and there first had lodgings in Scotland Yard. It was later, when he had become Member of Parliament for Hull, that he took what is said to have been a poor set of rooms on the second floor of a house in Maiden Lane approximately

where Nos. 39 and 40 are now. That house, it need hardly be said, is no longer in existence, but it was situated next door to the tavern known as the "Bedford Head" (it was succeeded by a modern Bedford Tavern) which occupied the site of No. 41 in the street. Although at this time he seems to have been as poor as the proverbial church mouse, Marvell was, as I have said, a Member of Parliament, and a letter dated April 21st, 1677, addressed by him to his constituents, from his lodgings in Maiden Lane, informs us of the period of his residence here. Other letters from him about this time are dated from Covent Garden, without any indication of a special street, but this does not necessarily mean that he was lodging anywhere else in this area.

One notable event occurred to Marvell during his occupancy of the rooms in Maiden Lane, for it was while he was here that he was visited by Lord Danby who came with a polite message from Charles II, and an offer of money. Marvell regarding the one as insincere and the other as a bribe, haughtily refused the proffered assistance. It is said that when Danby arrived he found him dining off the remains of a mutton bone, and that after the departure of the Royal emissary, the poet was obliged to send to a friend for the loan of a guinea.

Just half a century later another literary man, in this case a foreigner, was lodging in Maiden Lane. This was no less a personage than Voltaire who from the sign of the "White Peruke," wrote to Swift, in December 1727, asking for his influence in securing subscribers for *La Henriade*. His lodgings were, as the sign indicated, over the shop of a French hairdresser, and were two doors to the west of Marvell's lodgings. Here Voltaire remained for about three years (1726-29), what time he was accumulating material for his *Lettres sur les Anglais*, collecting subscriptions for his epic, and writing (in English) his essays on *The Civil Wars of France*, and on *Epic Poetry*. Here he was visited by many illustrious contemporaries, Pope, Young, and Congreve among them, and it was to the last named (then living in Surrey Street) that he paid his historic visit in 1728, when, to



quote his own account of the incident, "Congreve spoke of his works as trifles that were beneath him, and hinted to me in our first conversation that I should visit him upon no other footing than upon that of a gentleman who led a life of plainness and simplicity. I answered that had he been so unfortunate as to be a mere gentleman, I should never have come to see him ; and I was very much disgusted at so unreasonable a piece of vanity."<sup>1</sup>

With the aid of his powerful friends such as Pope and Swift, Voltaire obtained such a splendid subscription list for *La Henriade*, as laid the foundation of his future fortune. But his free and easy conversation annoyed and, indeed, horrified at least one person, for Pope's old mother was scandalised to such a degree at what the Frenchman said on one occasion at her son's table, that she rose and left the room. Another anecdote, relating to the time when he was lodging in Maiden Lane, is recorded of Voltaire, by Leigh Hunt in *The Town* : On one occasion, in one of his walks he was ridiculed as a Frenchman and was beset by a crowd. Whereupon he got on a door-step and harangued the people, in English, in praise of the liberty of the nation ; whereupon they hailed him as a good fellow and carried him shoulder high to his lodgings. *Se é non vero. . . .*

Before saying anything about several quite famous taverns that once existed in Maiden Lane, one must leave the earlier eighteenth century, and come to the latter portion of that era when there occurred here the most momentous event in the history of the street. For it was here, on April 23rd (well-omened day), 1775, that Joseph Mallord William Turner was born, at No. 26, in a room over the shop of his father who was a hair-dresser (could he, one wonders, have been the successor of Voltaire's landlord !). In any other country that house, or rather the building now on its site, would have been preserved for all time as a memorial of the greatest of all landscape-painters ; but being in London it has not even been dignified by a tablet ! Although his name is in no directory, not even in a telephone one, one

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres sur les Anglais.*

cannot but suppose that at least some of the authorities have heard of Turner. But perhaps they have not ; and if so one cannot, of course, blame them for leaving his birthplace unhonoured. Here the boy made his first sketches which were exhibited in his father's shop window, at the corner of Hand Court, and here he continued to live for five years, during which time he had become a Royal Academy student (1789). After that he appears to have worked in a house in Hand Court itself until 1800, when he was elected an A.R.A., and then took up his residence in what was then Norton (but is now Bolsover) Street, Fitzroy Square. Turner's amazing industry is proved by the fact that even by that time he had completed some sixty pictures, besides innumerable sketches. This historic house remained till 1861 when it was demolished—what a period !<sup>1</sup>

Walter Thornbury, in his *Life of Turner*, thus speaks of Turner's birthplace : “ I remember the house well—I have been up and down and all over it. The old barber's shop was on the ground floor, entered by a little dark door on the left side of Hand Court. The window was a long, low one ; the stairs were narrow, steep, and winding ; the rooms low, dark, and small, but square and cosy, however dirty and confined they may have been. Turner's bedroom, where he generally painted, looked into the lane, and was commanded by the opposite windows. The house to which he afterwards removed, for more quiet and room, I suppose, is at the end of Hand Court,<sup>2</sup> and is on a larger scale, with two windows in front ; but it must have been rather dark, though less noisy than his father's house.”

After recording Turner's birth in Maiden Lane, to say that Bonnell Thornton (whom it really is forgivable never to have heard of, or to have forgotten, although he made a name of sorts in his day) was also born here, comes almost as an anti-climax. His father was an

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Proctor, the sculptor of such promise, died, it is said, in a miserable garret here (others say in Clare Market) in 1794.

<sup>2</sup> Hand Court was on the north side of Maiden Lane, nearly opposite the back of the Adelphi Theatre ; it was cleared away during the 'eighties of the last century.





*From a water-colour drawing  
by Bartlett, dated 1837*

MACKLIN'S HOUSE IN COVENT GARDEN





apothecary in the street, and in this connection another fact is worth mentioning, namely, that it was in Maiden Lane, at a shop with the sign of the Hand and Pen, that Daffy's *Elixir* was first sold. Here is an advertisement concerning it, from the *Post Boy*, for January 1708<sup>1</sup> :

"Daffy's famous *Elixir Salutis* by Catherine Daffy, daughter of Mr. Thomas Daffy, late rector of Redmile, in the valley of Belvoir, who imparted it to his kinsman, Mr. Anthony Daffy, who published the same to the great benefit of the community, and to his own great advantage. The original receipt is now in my possession, left to me by my father. . . . To be had at the Hand and Pen, Maiden Lane, Covent Garden."

This street has been, in the past, almost as notable for its taverns as for its illustrious residents ; of these two stand out prominently, viz. the "Cider Cellars" and the "Bedford Head." The former (described in *Pendennis* as the Back Kitchen) stood where No. 21 Maiden Lane is to-day. It was first opened about 1730, and as its name implies, it was famous for its cider, and incidentally for its good cheer generally, and it was, too, one of those places where song and minstrelsy added to the attraction of the fare.<sup>2</sup> It was kept by one William Rhodes whose brother, by the way, was the proprietor of the "Coal Hole," in the Strand. But the "Cider Cellars" was on rather a higher plane than its rival, and its frequenters were often people of importance. Here Louis Napoleon, silent and inscrutable, might have been seen, what time he was living in King Street, St. James's, and dreaming of his future empire ; here Dr. Maginn, who edited *Fraser's Magazine*, was to be met with, and with him some of those notable people who helped to make that periodical world-renowned, and who live still in Maclises' life-like sketches. Richard Porson was, too, an earlier frequenter, as were both Isaac and Benjamin Disraeli, and Dr. Raine, the master of the Charter-house. There used to be a motto inscribed over the entrance—*Honos erit huic quoque homo*,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *London Past and Present*.

<sup>2</sup> In a book entitled *Adventures Underground*, published in 1750, it is described as a "Midnight Concert Room."

and this is said to have been suggested by Porson, one of whose amazing feats of memory is recorded by Lord Campbell: "I have heard," he writes, "Professor Porson, at the 'Cider Cellars' in Maiden Lane, recite from memory to delighted listeners the whole of Anstey's *Pleaders' Guide*. He concluded by relating that when buying a copy of it and complaining that the price was very high, the bookseller said, 'Yes, sir, but you know Law books are always very dear'."

The "Cider Cellars" was one of those free and easy places whither the younger generation were taken, or went on their own volition, to see literary and artistic notabilities and to hear such men as Ross (the original of Hodgen, the singer of *The Body-Snatcher*) troll forth his song called *Sam Hall*, or Sloman (adumbrated as Nadab in *The Newcomes*) give one of those ditties which were frequently more witty than decent. It was, in short, a place where the Toms and Jerrys and Bob Logics of the period were to be found, and gave point to many of the covert allusions to be found in the works of Pierce Egan and "Blackmantle."

Besides the references to it in Thackeray's book (and Thackeray knew it well), it is to be found referred to in some of Albert Smith's novels—*The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury*, for instance. But it is Thackeray with whose works it is chiefly identified, and who has left us this vignette of the place: "Healthy country tradesmen and farmers in London for their business, came and recreated themselves with the jolly singing and suppers at the Back Kitchen (the 'Cider Cellars'); squads of young apprentices and assistants—the shutters being closed over the scene of their labours—came hither, for fresh air, doubtless. Dashing young medical students, gallant, dashing, what is called loudly dressed and, must it be owned? somewhat dirty, came here, smoking and drinking and vigorously applauding the songs; young University bucks were to be found here, too, with that indescribable simper which is only learned at the knees of Alma Mater; and handsome young guardsmen and florid bucks from the St. James's Street clubs; nay!



senators—English and Irish—and even members of the House of Peers.”<sup>1</sup>

When the Adelphi Theatre was enlarged in 1858, the “Cider Cellars” was demolished; but, later, on part of the site it occupied the Adelphi Club had its premises, numbered 21a Maiden Lane, while upstairs was the Maiden Lane Synagogue which occupied the first floor until it was joined to the West End Synagogue, in St. Alban’s Place, Haymarket. At a later date the rooms thus used were fitted up as a small theatre for the purpose of rehearsals, and according to Mr. Jacobs,<sup>2</sup> it possessed every requisite convenience for this. The Bedford Club now occupies the premises.

Another tavern in this street is the “Bedford Head,” not to be confounded with the Bedford Coffee House or as it is sometimes called, the Bedford Arms, which stood in the Piazza, or with the present Bedford Head Hotel in Tottenham Court Road. It is the lineal descendant of the eponymous hostelry<sup>3</sup> which had existed here since the early years of the eighteenth century and which is linked up with our literary history by being referred to by Pope and Walpole, and by being a regular rendezvous for writers and artists of the day. Voltaire when living in Maiden Lane was a regular visitor here, and so was Paul Whitehead and his Hell-Fire set at a rather later date, as I have already stated; while the Shilling Rubber Club, consisting of Hogarth and Churchill, Fielding and Goldsmith, used to meet here. Later still it was run by Wildman, a brother-in-law of Horne Tooke, and a close friend of John Wilkes. The literary traditions of the earlier hotel were preserved in the present one in our own day when the Reunion Club, consisting of writers and artists, used to foregather here.

It would seem that the original hotel premises

<sup>1</sup> That extraordinary person, Renton Nicholson, used to officiate as judge at the mock court called the Judge and Jury, which was sometimes held at the Garrick’s Head, in Bow Street, and sometimes at the “Coal Hole” or at the “Cider Cellars.”

<sup>2</sup> *Covent Garden : Its Romance and History*, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> This appears to have been known as “The Old Welch Ale House.” It was demolished in 1870. By the way, the noted “Rules,” which dated from 1799, is housed at No. 35.

extended to the corner of Southampton Street, having probably a return-frontage on that thoroughfare, as the "Bedford" is sometimes found described as being in Southampton Street.<sup>1</sup>

There was a certain tavern in Maiden Lane, the position of which it is now impossible to identify, which was noted for its Jacobite sympathies and was, hence, the meeting-place of such as resented the coming of William III. The conspiracy against that monarch, in 1696, appears to have been hatched here, and Macaulay tells us how a large party of the would-be assassins were gathered here when they received their final orders for the nefarious act which was to have been perpetrated on the following day. As, however, William had received due warning of the plot, it ended in a fiasco. The historian does not give the name of the hostelry, but merely speaks of it generally as a Jacobite tavern.

One Coffee-house, Munday's, which had originally been started in Round Court, was later in Maiden Lane, but the only reference I find to it is the fact, recorded by Wheatley,<sup>2</sup> that the famous vellum-bound copy of the *Letters of Junius* was ordered by the author (Sir Philip Francis) to be left there for Woodfall, the printer, on March 4th, 1772.

One of the oldest businesses in London, that of Messrs. Godfrey and Cooke, chemists and druggists, whose premises were later in Southampton Street, was originally established in Maiden Lane in 1680. In their laboratory here experiments were made for the Hon. Robert Boyle, the natural philosopher who discovered the law of the Elasticity of the air, which goes by his name. On the site of these premises now stands the Roman Catholic Chapel of Corpus Christi, with its adjoining school and presbytery, which was opened by Cardinal Manning in 1874.

One can never, I think, pass through Maiden Lane without calling to mind the tragedy that occurred here at the stage door of the Adelphi Theatre, when the

<sup>1</sup> These are references to the "Bedford Head" as a place of assignation, in *Les Serails de Londres*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *London Past and Present*.

miscreant Prince murdered William Terriss there on a night in 1897, after a performance of *Black-eyed Susan*.

Akerman records three tokens as being issued from this street ; they are as follows : Alcock, a mealman, bearing the arms of the Grocers' Company ; George Bartmaker, at Camden House in Maiden Lane, dated 1666 ; and one at the Cock. He also gives two examples from another Maiden Lane, in Southwark, but I assume that the first three emanated from the Covent Garden street.

### SOUTHAMPTON STREET

Maiden Lane leads directly into Southampton Street, which was so named after Lady Rachel, daughter of Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and wife of William, Lord Russell, the famous patriot who was executed in Lincoln's Inn Fields. At least this is the accepted origin of the name, although had it been entitled Rachel Street—or even Wriothesley Street, it would have been more appropriate. It seems, indeed, to me more likely that the street was so called after Lady Rachel's father. In its early days it was known as New Southampton Street, to distinguish it from its prototype in Bloomsbury, and is found so referred to, notably by Arthur Maynwaring the actor, in his will dated 1712. It was not in existence when Morden and Lea produced their great plan of London in 1682 ; for as a matter of fact it was formed on part of the site once occupied by Bedford House, and was not opened till after that mansion had been pulled down in the year 1704.

At one time there used to be a bar-gate across this street, recalling the fact that the Duke of Bedford was permitted to place a barrier of this kind at the end of every thoroughfare on his estate ; an interesting survival which was, however, removed in 1860.

Southampton Street has numbered some important and, in one or two instances, famous, people among its past residents, the most notable of them being David Garrick. He occupied No. 27, a house on the west side facing Tavistock Street, and here he remained from the year in which he married Mlle Violette, in 1749, till



1772, when he migrated to what is now No. 4 Adelphi Terrace.

Percy Fitzgerald, in his *Life of Garrick*, describes the actor's abode in Southampton Street, as "one of the good chocolate-coloured houses, built of sound old brick, its long windows very close together, and with more architectural purpose than any house in the street. Within there was plenty of the old panelling, and beyond the study the little room where Mr. and Mrs. Garrick used to breakfast." This little room, together with Garrick's study, which had been built at the back, has since been removed ; but there used to hang in the hall (I am not aware if it still does) a shield bearing the actor's coat of arms and an inscription, telling how here "he read in the parlour *Othello* to the critics, and in the first floor held the party when Goldsmith went to borrow the guinea, and seeing the wax candles, his heart failed him."<sup>1</sup>

This period was Garrick's most successful one as an actor, but even his fame and popularity did not avail against popular clamour on at least one occasion. For a certain section of the London playgoers, objecting to his bringing out a magnificent ballet entitled *The Chinese Festival*, in 1755, went to his house and eased their annoyance by smashing all the windows. This ebullition of popular feelings was caused by the fact that the caste of the ballet included a number of French dancers, and as at that time we were at war with their country, the patriots resented their presence here. Before coming to wreak their vengeance on Garrick's private house, the mob had destroyed the scenery of Drury Lane Theatre.

Cradock, in his *Reminiscences*, tells various stories of Garrick during his residence in Southampton Street. Cradock was himself an inhabitant of the thoroughfare, and here is one of the anecdotes he relates of his friend : "My apartments," he writes, "were at that time in Southampton Street, opposite Mr. Garrick's, who sometimes would divert a few friends with a ludicrous story at my expense, 'That I had stayed out so very late one

<sup>1</sup> Wilmot Harrison's *Memorable London Houses*,

night at the "Piazza" Coffee-house ; and that at my return I had disturbed Mrs. Garrick and the whole neighbourhood ; so much so, indeed, that he was afraid he must have called the watch.' Part of this story might be correct ; but Mrs. Garrick owned to whom it was indebted for its embellishments. The whole truth was, that the lady of the house where I lodged was built on a very large scale, and in her hurry to let me in, by some accident or other, fell down in the passage, and could not readily be got up again ; and I believe that, growing rather impatient, I possibly might have called out very vociferously, till the lady could be safely removed ; and that the husband who was seriously disturbed, became angry, and absolutely declared that his wife at no future time should sit up so late for a lodger."

Cradock further tells us that it was at Lord Mansfield's suggestion that Garrick removed to the Adelphi, but that its exposed situation did not suit him so well as the more sheltered house in Southampton Street.

The great actor's one time abode is still known as Garrick House, and bears a commemorative tablet on its front. At one time it was an hotel, but later was divided up and let out as offices, with the result that the former rooms of considerable dimensions have been converted into smaller ones.

In addition to the presence of Garrick here, Southampton Street has had a distinctly theatrical atmosphere about it in the past ; but the fact, frequently asserted, that Colley Cibber was born here, can hardly be substantiated, in view of the statement in his *Apology*, where he distinctly says that that event took place in Southampton Street, "facing Southampton House." This was, of course, the Southampton Street in Bloomsbury, but as Southampton House was afterwards known as Bedford House, the mistake can perhaps be accounted for. However, if Colley Cibber cannot be claimed as a one time resident, a greater one than he can be ; for before going to Howard Street, and later to Surrey Street, Strand, Congreve lived for a time here, although probably for only a short time. Other histrions, however, helped to keep up the street's dramatic character,

for Mrs. Oldfield, on the authority of Arthur Maynwaring who mentions the fact in his will, was at one time living here about the period when Dick Estcourt, the actor, died at his lodgings on the west side of the street in the August of 1712. Estcourt's name is to-day a forgotten one ; but in his time he was quite an outstanding actor, being the creator of a number of comedy parts, and a successful impersonator of Falstaff. He was connected with the Beefsteak Club, of which he was the first "provedor," and he figures in *The Tatler*, as Tom Mirror. He was one of those who earned the unstinted praise both of Steele and Colley Cibber, and was, it is said, one of the few people who succeeded in getting any money out of the great but parsimonious Duke of Marlborough.

Another resident here, indirectly connected with the stage, was Thomas Linley, the musical composer, whose lovely daughter became the wife of Sheridan. Linley having left his earlier home in Bath, in 1776, settled in London, and in conjunction with his son-in-law and Richard Ford, purchased Garrick's share in Drury Lane Theatre where he acted as musical director for a number of years. He died, on November 19th, 1795, at No. 11, Southampton Street, a house on the east side, which was pulled down in 1890.

The theatrical associations of the thoroughfare are rounded off by the fact that Sir W. S. Gilbert, of Gilbert and Sullivan opera fame, was born here in 1836 ; just twelve years after Dr. Lemprière, whose Classical Dictionary is known, at least by name, to most people, died in his house here, on February 1st, 1824.

### TAVISTOCK STREET

Tavistock Street, which debouches out of Southampton Street on the west side of that thoroughfare and links it up with York Street, is to-day filled with fruit-merchants' shops, amidst which the splendid offices of *Country Life*, at No. 20, seem rather out of place, although they give the thoroughfare its one architectural feature of importance.



Tavistock Street is not to be confounded, as it sometimes is, with Tavistock Row which, as may be seen in Horwood's Plan, was represented by fourteen houses erected on the south side of the central square, where the garden wall of old Bedford House used to be, and in a direct line, westwards, with Henrietta Street. The enlargement of the flower-market swept these dwellings away, together with little Tavistock Court which ran from the east end of the Row southward to Tavistock Street.<sup>1</sup>

When exactly the latter thoroughfare came into existence is not clear. Rocque, in 1746, shows it, but in Morden and Lea's plan (1682) it does not appear; and it seems probable that it was formed about 1704 when Bedford House was demolished and when so drastic a change in street planning took place in this area. It is not a thoroughfare with any outstanding memories, but once its shops were famous, and in this connection one of the reminiscences of Thomas Walker, in *The Original*, is of interest: "Tavistock Street," he writes, "was once a street of fashionable shops, what Bond Street was till lately (!) and what Bond Street and Regent Street together are now. I remember hearing an old lady say that in her young days the crowd of handsome equipages in Tavistock Street was considered one of the sights of London. I have had the curiosity to stride it. It is about one hundred and sixty yards long, and, before the footways were widened, would have admitted three carriages abreast."

One of the early businesses here was that carried on by Fliddon, noted for his snuff, and it would be interesting if it could be proved, to find that the Mr. Augustus Minns of Dickens's *Sketches by Boz*, who was a clerk at Somerset House and occupied a first floor in Tavistock Street, lived over Fliddon's premises.

Among extant trade cards, several refer to former commercial undertakings in this thoroughfare. Thus we find one of Thomas Paulin, mercer, at the sign of the Statue of Queen Elizabeth, a card engraved by

<sup>1</sup> I have something to say about Tavistock Row when dealing with the central portion of Covent Garden.

Sherborne. Another was issued by one Gordon, at Ye Golden Fan and Crown, and was executed by J. Sympson from a drawing by Hogarth ; while yet another was Jackson's, at his Habit Warehouse, engraved by Woodfield, and dated 1770.

These are all given in Mr. Ambrose Heal's valuable work on *London Tradesmen's Cards of the Eighteenth Century*.

There was at least one noted tavern in Tavistock Street. It was called the "Salutation," at the corner of Tavistock Court, and was for a time kept by a Mr. Leveridge, the singer, after he had retired from the stage. It was while here that he published a book of songs, in 1727. After him the place was run by Mr. Yerrel ; and it was he who took down the original sign-board which is supposed to have been set up in 1707, the date appearing on a stone at the Covent Garden end of the Court, and represented two men saluting each other, and dressed in the coats with square pockets, and wearing the flowing wigs of the period.

The "Salutation" appears, during the Regency, to have been known as Bunch's, and here the Prince, with Lord Surrey and Sheridan, was wont to foregather, the trio going by the names of Blackstock, Greystock, and Thinstock. The place in Yerrel's day was called familiarly "The Nook."

Before proceeding along York Street, the eastern continuation of Tavistock Street, which must be considered in the next chapter among the thoroughfares on the east side of Covent Garden proper, I will make a *détour* into Exeter Street and Burleigh Street with their subsidiary courts and alleys, in order to complete our peregrination in that part of the area which lies more or less south of the Market.

### EXETER STREET

To-day one can reach Exeter Street from Tavistock Street by way of Burleigh Street, but in earlier times the last-named thoroughfare only led from Exeter Street to the Strand, and did not extend north to Tavistock

Street. Rocque (1746) shows it as a comparatively narrow thoroughfare between Catherine Street (now absorbed in Wellington Street) and where it joins Burleigh Street, and beyond that point narrowing still more into a mere alley called *Denmark Court*, so named from its proximity to Denmark House, as Somerset House was designated by order of James I in 1616, when it was bestowed on his Queen, Anne of Denmark. This alley had a watch-house in it on the north side.

Strype's description of Exeter Street will explain why it was thus cut off from Tavistock Street. "Exeter Street," he writes, "cometh out of Katherine Street, and runneth up as far as the back wall of Bedford Yard or garden." This wall was that appertaining to Bedford House. The thoroughfare was named after Exeter House and was formed soon after that mansion was demolished in 1676.

Exeter Street can hardly be said to possess any special history, but it rejoices in an immortal memory. For here it was that on first coming to London, Johnson lived for a time. "Johnson," writes Boswell, "had a little money when he came to town (in March, 1737), and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a stay-maker, in Exeter Street." The great man in after days was wont to relate how he here finished his poem of "London," in a garret, to which the reference to the "dungeons of the Strand" in that poem is probably an allusion. Here, too, he wrote a portion of his play *Irene*; and on one occasion at a dinner at Foote's, when Dr. Francis remarked that a certain speech of Pitt's in the House of Commons, during the last portion of Walpole's administration, was the best he had ever read, Johnson astonished the company by remarking "that speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street."

Before leaving Exeter Street, I may mention one or two alleys which enter the Strand at this point, although they do not all communicate with the former thoroughfare. Of these Denmark Court runs down from Denmark Street (generally itself called Denmark Court) at right angles, to the Strand; the other by-ways between



Southampton Street and Burleigh Street, are Coral Court, little more than a yard, Greyhound Court, belonging to the Greyhound Tavern (whence, of course, its name), and Marygold Court. None of these has any history attaching to it, but it should be remembered that this Greyhound Court is not to be confounded with one of the same name, near Milford Lane, further east in the Strand.

### BURLEIGH STREET

This thoroughfare was formed in 1678, and took its name from the famous owner of Exeter House which had then recently been pulled down. When laid out, as I have said, it only extended as far as Exeter Street ; its continuation into Tavistock Street being of a much later date—the 'thirties of the last century. Once it possessed a church, dedicated to St. Michael, and designed by that excellent ecclesiastical architect, James Savage, in 1833. It is a remarkable fact that hardly any writers on London or even on London's churches, mention this edifice ; nor can I discover any record of its history or disappearance. But in the little bird's-eye views illustrating Mr. Herbert Fry's *Guide to London* (1863), it appears with its tall steeple towering above the adjacent Lyceum Theatre.

With regard to Exeter 'Change, and other features of the Strand at this point, I refrain from saying anything as I have already dealt with them as fully as I am capable of in a former book.

When the Strand Improvement Act of 1829 came into operation, the changes it caused in street alignment were considerable, and the formation of such thoroughfares as King William Street, Adelaide Street,<sup>1</sup> Agar Street, and Duncannon Street, swept away all sorts of strange little courts and by-ways in the area which had gained an unenviable notoriety as *Porridge Island* and *The*

<sup>1</sup> Adelaide Street, which has no history, at least once comprised a music hall, containing an instrument called by the portentous name of the Apollonicon, which was constructed by Messrs. Flight and Robson, and was said "to possess powers of a high and varied order."

*Bermudas* ; while the erection of Charing Cross Hospital in 1831 obliterated such once well-known centres as the Round Court about which I have already had something to say.

But the changes thus created in the south-westerly portion of the neighbourhood here dealt with, considerable as they were, were hardly comparable with what took place but a few years ago in the south-easterly corner, when the vast Aldwych-Kingsway scheme was initiated, and much of the face of this part of London was changed out of all recognition.

There is no necessity here to go deeply into that rehabilitation of our area, because although affecting it in many respects, its chief force was felt further east where Holywell Street and Wych Street and the congeries of small alleys and courts to their north, were swept away and air and space at long last let into their dim, damp, and dirty recesses.

Before this took place, Drury Lane, our eastern boundary, only communicated with the Strand by a tiny alley, named Little Drury Lane, or Drury Court, as it was called later, for it tailed off, as it were, in a south-easterly direction into Wych Street, joining the Strand at St. Clement's Church ; and more or less following the lines of the present eastern section of the Aldwych semicircle. To-day, as everyone is aware, Drury Lane debouches directly into Aldwych, its lower end having been truncated by the formation of the latter thoroughfare. But other changes have also altered the contours of this part, for the western sweep of Aldwych has eliminated the lower portion of Catherine Street, leaving its upper part, once called Brydges Street, to perpetuate the name formerly only applied to the lower half. When, too, Wellington Street was created as an approach to Waterloo Bridge, in 1829-30, it formed a southern continuation of Bow Street and that thoroughfare's earlier pendant, Charles Street, which only extended as far south as the point where Tavistock Street on the west, and York Street on the east, join it. In 1844 this Charles Street was renamed Upper Wellington Street.

The area which we have to cover here and in the succeeding chapter, is what may, therefore, be called the eastern portion of our subject, with Russell Street as its northern, and Drury Lane as its eastern, boundary. And before dealing with Russell Street, which is in many respects the most important and historically interesting of the thoroughfares which go to make up what we term Covent Garden, I propose to say something about the other streets and alleys, some of which, like Charles Street and Brydges Street, debouch from its south side, while others communicate with it, only in an indirect way.

Charles Street, as its name implies, was so called in honour of Charles I, and was formed about the year 1637. It was but a short thoroughfare, before it was extended, under the generic name of Wellington Street, into the Strand, but it has its memories ; and among them was the presence here, as noted by Strype, of one of those public baths or Hummums, for which this quarter was in Charles II's time, as we have seen, noted. This was evidently one of the more fashionable of these centres, for we are told that it was "much resorted to by the gentry."

In view of the fact that the Lyceum Theatre, in Wellington Street (the southern continuation of Charles Street), was originally, before its rebuilding, used for concerts *inter alia*, it is interesting to find that in Charles Street itself there once existed a music-room which during the latter years of the seventeenth century, had no little vogue. Originally started in Bow Street by one Franks, it migrated, about 1689, to Charles Street, and references are to be found to the doings here in the news-sheets of the period. Thus the *London Gazette*, for February 19th, 1690, announces that "The Consort of Musick, lately in Bow Street, is removed next Bedford Gate in Charles Street, Covent Garden, where a room is newly built for that purpose" ; while a paragraph in the same paper, for March 6th of the following year, speaks of "A Consort of Music, with several new voices, to be performed on the 10th instant at the *Vendu* in Charles Street, Covent Garden."



What this *Vendu* indicates I am unable to say ; but it looks to me very like a mis-spelling for *Venue*, which might easily have been a name given to a meeting-place of this character.

That this musical centre was a well-known one at the time, seems proved by the fact that when, in 1693, a collection of songs, under the title of *Thesaurus Musicus*, was published, it is stated that the songs were those performed "at Their Majesties' Theatre and at the Consorts in Villier [*sic*] Street, in York Buildings, and in *Charles Street*." The Strand and its purlieus seem then to have been regular nests of singing birds !

Among the notable people who *may* have lived in Charles Street, three are definitely identified with this thoroughfare. Of these Colley Cibber was one. According to Thomas Grignion, in a letter to Thomas Dibdin,<sup>1</sup> he occupied No 3, a house which is shown by Horwood to have stood on the west side of the street two doors from Tavistock Street. It is not known when he took these lodgings or how long he remained in them, but that he was here in 1731, seems proved by the fact that when in that year some thieves stole the lead from the roof, a contemporary news-sheet remarked that "since only lead and no other metal was taken from his (Cibber's) house, the detriment will not be great, either to him or to the public." It seems probable that Cibber was living in Charles Street where, by the way, he wrote his *Apology for his own Life* (1740), after his abode in Spring Gardens, and before he went to Berkeley Square.

Another theatrical personage was a neighbour of his in Charles Street, in the person of Barton Booth (his name is still kept alive by Barton Street, Westminster)<sup>2</sup> who lived next door, at No. 4, and there died on May 10th, 1733. Booth, who was a tragedian of great merit, acted with Betterton and Wilks among others, and created the name-part in Addison's *Cato* when it was produced at Drury Lane in 1713. He had already been

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *London Past and Present*.

<sup>2</sup> Barton Street was formed in 1722, by the actor on ground belonging to him. Cowley Street also perpetuated his residence at Cowley in Middlesex.

favourably referred to when taking the part of Pyrrhus, by Steele in *The Spectator* for March 24th, 1712. He had been educated at Westminster under the famous Busby, and was intended for the Church, but, giving up this idea, began his career as an actor in Dublin.

The last of the illustrious trio in Charles Street was David Garrick, who is said by Grignion to have lodged at Easty's Hotel, in that street, but in what year is not stated. In any case it was but a temporary abode here.

There could hardly have been in so short a thoroughfare a great number of shops, but at least one of them is known by the trade card which its proprietor issued, and which bears on it the words "James Watson, at his Scots Holland warehouse in Charles Street, Covent Garden." As the figure of St. Andrew is represented on the card, the assumption is that this was the sign of Watson's shop. Charles Street, small as it was, is however linked up with our literature, for Dryden places the residence of his Sir Martin Mar-all here, and makes the character specifically state the fact.

As Charles Street<sup>1</sup> may now be said to be represented by Wellington Street, at least a few words must be said about that relatively modern thoroughfare. It came into existence just about a century ago, and ran through the Cecil property already described. Wimbledon House occupied its north-east corner, while Exeter House was on its west, the gate of Bedford House being at its northern extremity, i.e. where it joined Charles Street, which was for a time (1844) called Upper Wellington Street.

Many people will remember the earlier offices of the *Morning Post*, at the south-east corner of Wellington Street; those offices which had taken the place of earlier ones close by, but which were themselves destined to be pulled down when the Aldwych-Kingsway improvement was begun. The present structure, which is now the *Illustrated London News* office (the *Morning Post* having gone further east), occupies part of the site of its

<sup>1</sup> In *The English Spy*, it is stated that there used to be a low haunt in this thoroughfare known as "The Field of Blood." I have been unable to identify it.

Sir Mr Johnson can rem on her  
 that I decland to him abou 12 Months  
 since that I had not have quitted the  
 Theatre when I did, if your warmth  
 of temper had not provoked  
 me to it. At ye same time I on  
 told my friend that my motive  
 for so doing was ye being unable  
 to attend my shop & ye business of  
 ye Stage together -  
 Thomas Daviey



After a print by C. J. Smith, dated 1838

TOM DAVIES'S HOUSE IN RUSSELL STREET





predecessor, or in other words ground where the Wimbledon House I have just mentioned originally stood. That mansion was burned down in 1628, and on its site a congeries of shops arose, among them one of D'Oyley, the fashionable haberdasher (hence d'oyleys) of the time of Queen Anne. Here, too, on what was once a square plot, but is now a triangle, stood the old Gaiety Theatre—the Gaiety of Fred Leslie and Nelly Farren, of Edward Terry and E. J. Lonnen.

And then as one walked up Wellington Street, one used to observe a stuccoed bay-window projecting on the east side of the street, and if you were at all imaginative you visualised perhaps London's most famous ghost—no, not that of Dr. Johnson—that of Charles Dickens. For this was the office of *Household Words*, started in 1850, and here the great man was generally to be found when he came up to Town from Gads Hill. In common with all such landmarks it has long since disappeared.

A narrow passage ran from Wellington Street to Catherine Street. It was known as Exeter Arcade, or sometimes erroneously as Exeter 'Change<sup>1</sup> (a sort of attempted continuation of the famous place of that name close by in the Strand) ; but as an arcade it was not a success ; few arcades in London, except the Burlington, seem to be, and when the old Gaiety was built it was swept away. At its Wellington Street corner stood a tall narrow building, let out in chambers, and in one set of these J. L. Toole was living about the year 1860.

If we can suppose Exeter Arcade still in existence we can pass through it to the next thoroughfare to be considered—Catherine Street.

### CATHERINE STREET

Since the Aldwych-Kingsway changes, this street has been truncated, and what remains of it really represents

<sup>1</sup> It is so called in a book entitled *London as it is To-day* (1855), where there is a woodcut of the arcade which was constructed in 1845, from the designs of Sydney Smirke, R.A., and decorated by a Mr. Lang.

what were in earlier days Brydges Street and Catherine Street, the latter being the southerly extension of the former.

It links up Russell Street with the Strand, and still preserves more or less its original alignment.

### BRYDGES STREET

It is impossible to separate, when casting a retrospective view over this area, Catherine Street from Brydges Street, because although they were originally separate thoroughfares, they now, as I have said, really form but one. Brydges Street was in existence a number of years before Catherine Street was formed, in order to connect Russell Street with the Strand. Indeed it was laid out, together with so many of the neighbouring thoroughfares, in or about the year 1637, and it was so named after George Brydges, Lord Chandos. According to Strype it was a "place well built and inhabited, and of great resort for the theatre there"; this playhouse being, of course, Drury Lane, which first came into existence in 1663, and of which I speak in another chapter. But although in common with most of the thoroughfares which were made in this part during the seventeenth century, it was at first fashionable, it seems to have deteriorated sooner than some of the others, and even when Dryden was still living, it had become of so questionable a character that he speaks, in his epilogue to *King Arthur*, in the coarsest terms of what was then a disreputable street; while in that to his *Sir Courtly Nice*, he goes so far as to describe it as "strumpet Fair," a reputation it shared later with Catherine Street, against the frequenters of which Gay, in his *Trivia*, warns his readers.

Nor did it improve with age, for Fielding refers to it both in *Jonathan Wild* and *Tom Jones*, as a place of bad resort and one to be avoided. Indeed the houses in it which had once been "well-inhabited," as it used to be termed, had become in the eighteenth century hot-beds of iniquity, and were the abode of thieves and prostitutes, and even murderers. At least one who was



convicted and hanged for threatening murder and actually committing robbery is recorded as living here ; notably a certain Thomas Carr.

Carr's father lived in Covent Garden and was a person of affluence and respectability, I suppose one of *the Carr family*. His son, Thomas, was well-educated, and in due course was articled to a Mr. Walker, a notary, in Princes Street, as Drury Lane was once called. Later Thomas became Vestry Clerk ; but he unfortunately thought more of the ladies who frequented his neighbourhood (for he lived in Brydges Street himself) than he appears to have done of his profession. His connection, too, with the Old Bailey, where he used to attend in the course of his legal business, brought him into contact with a number of undesirable people, and he seems to have become mixed up with those who gained a livelihood by concocting false evidence. Suffice it to say that he was apprehended for robbing a man, named Quarrington, in a brothel in Shire Lane (the "Angel and Crown"—a notorious place) and threatening him with death if he resisted. Carr was eventually brought to trial, and being sentenced to be hanged, was duly executed at Tyburn, on January 18th, 1738.<sup>1</sup>

As might have been expected in such a neighbourhood the taverns which once existed here were anything but orderly places. One of them, the "Fleece," which occupied a site at the corner of York Street, had a very indifferent reputation, and fights which were not infrequently bloody and even sometimes fatal, were of constant occurrence here as early as the seventeenth century.

But the "Fleece" will always be famous, because it was one of the taverns which Pepys occasionally patronised, although, as he tells us, he was informed that "a Scotch knight was killed basely" there, and that in this house "a great many had been formerly killed."<sup>2</sup> From an entry in Rugge's *Diurnal*, we learn the identity not only of the victim but also of his murderer : "Nov.

<sup>1</sup> The full details are given in Caulfield's *Remarkable Characters*.

<sup>2</sup> Diary for December 1st, 1660.

1660. One Sir John Gooscall was unfortunately killed in the Fleece Tavern, Covent Garden, by one Balendin, a Scotchman, who was taken, and committed to the Gatehouse in this month." However, two months after he had heard this report, we find Pepys going there with Captain John Cuttle, and Curtis, and Captain Peter Mootham, and there remaining, "telling stories of Algiers." On the following November 25th, he writes that being at the Opera House, he found there Mr. Sanchy and Mrs. Mary Archer, "and thence took them to the 'Fleece' in Covent Garden; but Mr. Sanchy could not by any argument get his lady to trust herself with him into the taverne." No doubt the lady had heard reports of the place which Aubrey describes as being "very unfortunate for homicides; there have been severall killed; three in my time."

No doubt this tavern was like many such at that and the succeeding period, respectable during the day-time, but anything but so after nightfall. L'Estrange, in the translation he produced of Quevedo's *Visions*, in 1667, describes one of the bullies who haunted the "Fleece" as declaring that he was never well except he was there stuffing himself "with food and tipple, till the hoops were ready to burst." As the place is sometimes found described as being in York Street, it would seem as if it had a back-entrance to that thoroughfare, as its main frontage was on the west side of Brydges Street.

Aubrey who was writing his *Miscellanies* in 1692, states in that work that the "Fleece" had by then been converted into a private house.

Another tavern in this street was the "Rose," of which a token is extant (it is given by Burn), which stood on the east side, next to Drury Lane Theatre, and was demolished in 1775-6, when Garrick employed Robert Adam to make his enlargements to the play-house.<sup>1</sup> It was kept by one Long and his wife who after his death carried it on and issued another token. It was

<sup>1</sup> Garrick retained the sign, and had it framed in an oval on the front of the building, as can be seen in J. T. Smith's well-known engraving.

a favourite resort of Gay, and was, indeed, a very noted place of entertainment, as the fact of its being adjacent to the playhouse would suggest. But its reputation was hardly, if at all, better than that of the "Fleece," if we are to judge by the remarks of the writer of *The Morning Rambler*, or *The Town Humour*, published in 1672, wherein are described the drunken quarrels, the horrible acts of the Hectors, as they called themselves, and the midnight orgies that occurred here. Shadwell, too, refers to it in his play, entitled *The Scourers*, of 1691, when he makes Tope in that play remark apropos of these gentry who were similar to the Hectors and Mohacks, but rejoiced in another name, "They were brave fellows, indeed! In those days a man could not go from the Rose Tavern to the Piazza once, but he must venture his life twice."

In those days these taverns close to a theatre resembled, *mutatis mutandis*, the lounge of a music-hall as it was when I was young, *consule Planco*. In them gathered together the women of the town, and here the rakes and fine gentlemen came to meet them. Women and wine have a remarkable power of creating, or inciting to, disturbance, hence the innumerable brawls which distinguished these centres and made many of them by-words throughout the town. As the writer of *The Rake Reformed*, of 1718, puts it :

"Not far from thence appears a pendant sign,  
Whose bush declares the product of the vine,  
Whence to the traveller's sight the full-blown Rose,  
Its dazzling beauties doth in gold disclose ;  
And painted faces flock in tally'd clothes ";

while in the same poem other references to the place are to be found.

It was about six or seven years after this was written that Gay with some of his friends here produced the well-known song of "Molly Megg of the Rose"; the girl in question being the then well-known and attractive barmaid of the place, who has been perpetuated in other verses.

Indeed the "Rose" gave rise to many contemporary



poetical allusions, at least two of them being contained in Tom D'Urfey's collection of songs, published in 1719, and others in such effusions as *The Play-House*, by the anonymous T. G. Gent., included in *Poems on Affairs of State*, and similar productions rather obviously inspired by Juvenal and more immediately by Gay who, however, curiously enough, does not mention the "Rose" in his *Trivia*.

The principal room in this tavern is, too, perpetuated in another art, for Hogarth's makes it the scene of the third print of his *Rake's Progress* (1735), and the man introduced holding a dish and a candle, was a porter for many years employed here.

During the reign of Charles II, when the place was in its glory, it was kept by one Long, and was, of course, known to Pepys, who records at least two visits ; one, on December 24th, 1667, when he "drank some burnt wine" here ; and again, on May 18th, 1668, when he slipped out from a performance of Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden*, and at the "Rose" "got half a breast of mutton off the spit, and dined all alone."

At a later date the members of the Treason Club, which was formed in 1688, for the purpose of deposing James II and welcoming William III, held their meetings at the "Rose." This tavern, by the way, is sometimes described as in Russell Street, but this was because it stood at the junction of that thoroughfare and Brydges Street, and possibly possessed an entrance into the former. The "Rose" in Rose Street, mentioned in *Old and New London*, had, I think, no existence<sup>1</sup> and has been confounded with the place here described by me. According to Larwood, in his *History of Signboards*, it was at the "Rose," in Brydges Street, that the meeting (which ended so fatally) between the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun, in Hyde Park, was arranged.

Close by was a barber's shop, as we learn from Steele's reference to it in the second of his *Spectators*, where he speaks of a member of the Inner Temple, who was wont

<sup>1</sup> But it would seem, from an extant token, given by Burn, that one John More had a rival establishment to that of the Longs, also known as "The Rose."

to have "his shooes rubbed and his Perriwig powder'd at the Barber's as you go into the *Rose*."

The tradition of tavern life in Brydges Street was kept up in later times when the whole thoroughfare had become Catherine Street, and among the hostelrys which existed here in the nineteenth century, were "The Drury Lane Tavern," the "Sir John Falstaff," the "Sheridan Knowles," the "Elysium," "H's," and the "White Hart."

What history most of these may have had, other than as forming part of a supremely interesting past of London, and as having, no doubt, been patronised at various times by notable people, is lost in obscurity. Here and there, however, a fact emerges, as that the "Sheridan-Knowles" was named after the well-known dramatist who frequented it, and that on each of the panels of the coffee-room, was inscribed the name of an outstanding dead or living dramatic writer. Here, too, the famous "Owls" at one time held their meetings. The "White Hart" (White Hart Yard, shown by Horwood, was named after it) also enjoyed a literary flavour at one time, for here the Savage Club had its headquarters after it had first met at the Nell Gwynn Tavern. These associations were appropriate to a street in which stood a certain hostelry frequented by Johnson, who once said of it, "the house furnished no supper; but a woman attended with Mutton Pies, which anybody might purchase."

There was once a notorious haunt in this street which *The English Spy* describes (with Robert Cruikshank's illustration) as "The Hall of Infamy, alias the Oyster Saloon, or New Covent Garden Hell"; and we are told of it that at four o'clock in the morning, the depravity of human nature and the operation of licentiousness upon the young and thoughtless, was to be seen in all its nakedness, and that there, a Newgate turnkey would, no doubt, recognise many old acquaintances.

But Brydges (or Catherine Street) has had other associations besides these. Here, for instance, after the Great Fire, the first private Post Office, originally started in Cloak Lane, Dowgate Hill, was set up and

remained till its transference to Lombard Street, in 1690. Nor has the thoroughfare been without its newspaper offices, actual and in fiction ; for here *The Echo* (who remembers that small news-sheet, which really did resemble more or less an eighteenth-century production, and was the first of the halfpenny papers ?) was started in 1868 ; while the *Pall Mall Gazette* (of Pendennis) had its offices at No. 225 Catherine Street, a number you will look for in vain, I need hardly say.

Apart from its actual newspaper offices Catherine Street was at one time a great newspaper-distributing centre, and here it was, before papers were sold for so small a sum as a penny, that the newsboys assembled in order to sell or buy the morning papers ; and in a very interesting article entitled "A Bit of Vanishing London,"<sup>1</sup> by Mr. J. Farlow Wilson, that gentleman tells how "it was customary for news-vendors to lend the morning papers for an hour each day at a charge of from sixpence to a shilling a week, and to solicit orders from provincial customers, to whom these same papers would be despatched by the evening post, the usual charge being about 24s. per quarter. The postage cost nothing, as the compulsory stamp franked them. At times, when the news was important, there would be an extra demand for the papers, and they would be scarce. When otherwise, the vendors would probably have some left on hand. As most of the news-agents were bound to despatch copies to their provincial customers by the same night's post, those who had sold out were compelled to buy, and those who had papers left were desirous of selling. About four o'clock, therefore, Catherine Street resounded with the cries of the boys who shouted out the names of the papers they had to sell or wanted to buy. This institution or 'exchange,' as it was called, ceased to exist with the advent of the cheap daily paper, consequent upon the abolition of the compulsory stamp, and now the very street will soon be no more than a recollection."

Indeed at one time there could have been little room

<sup>1</sup> This appears in *The Printing World* for March, 1900, and was reprinted in Vol. I of the *London Topographical Record*.



for anything else, so full was the street of journalistic enterprise. Here, according to Thornbury, the *Morning Herald*, the *Court Journal*, the *Naval and Military Gazette*, the *Gardener's Gazette*, the *Builder*, the *Weekly Register*, and the *Court Gazette*, have had at one time or another their headquarters.

The name of Catherine Street, too, is actually preserved in the title of a tract, published in 1714, and called *The Maypole's New Year's Gift, or Thanks returned to his Benefactors, humbly inscribed to the Two Corners of Catherine Street, Strand; written by a parishioner of St. Mary, Savoy*.

During the latter years of the seventeenth century, a Nonconformist meeting house stood in Brydges Street, and here for nearly thirty years Daniel Burgess ministered to his flock. Burgess seems to have been one of those unconventional clergymen who attracted by their humour and outspokenness those who might otherwise seldom or never have entered a place of worship. Not unfrequently his droll manners were ill-suited to the pulpit, but he probably meant well and may have done more good than austerer men have succeeded in effecting. His congregations were undoubtedly mixed ones, and Ned Ward speaks of visiting the tabernacle. Swift also refers to Burgess, and his name crops up in the letters and reminiscences of the period in which he lived (1645-1713).

In earlier days it was the custom to execute those who were thought to merit death as near to the scene of their crime as possible, and so it is probable that James Hall, who was hanged at the end of Catherine Street in September 1741, had committed the deed for which he suffered (not, in those times, necessarily a murder) either in the street itself or in the immediate vicinity.

One tradesman's card is recorded, in Mr. Heal's catalogue, as emanating from Brydges Street, and it is inscribed "Poole's West Virginia at the too Golding Potts and Bottles, in Bridge Street, Covent Garden." One hopes Poole was a better tobacconist than he obviously was a speller.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cobbett's *Annual Register* was published by Bagshaw, who had his shop in Brydges Street; a fact stated in *The Rejected Addresses*.

But there was once a still more important business house in Catherine Street than that associated with the distribution of tobacco. For here at No. 22, which was in due course to become the office of *The Echo*, in the year 1690 one John Walsh started a music warehouse, his sign being the Golden Harp and Hautboy, a sign long after to be seen on the front of the house.

There appears to be little doubt that from this music-publisher's was issued the whole bulk of Handel's compositions, Walsh's imprint being invariably found on the first editions of Handel's works. Walsh, who died in 1739, as his son and successor in the business did in 1766, appears to have engraved his own plates for the music he published, and some of these are now in the possession of Messrs. Novello, Ewer & Co., who took over Walsh's business from his descendants. It is said that Dr. Arne, who, as we have seen, lived in King Street close by, was a frequent visitor to Walsh's premises, which ceased to be those of a musical publisher in or about the year 1780.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the building was taken by a Mr. Phillipstall, who opened it as an exhibition where mechanical and other contrivances were on view, as well as various attractions, such as musical prodigies, rope-dancers, clowns, "Chinese shadows," and so forth. Later it was converted into a playhouse, and was known as the Sanspareil Theatre in 1810; this name being changed to that of the Theatre of Variety ten years later. It seems to have been the pioneer of the variety stage, and was one of the first theatres to be lighted with gas (in September 1823). The performances continued of a heterogeneous character, such as were popular at that period, and consisted of a mixture of pantomime, operetta, and ballet. In 1835 the licence having been withdrawn, the place became the Pantheon Amateur Theatre, admission to which was only by special tickets, and it was under the proprietorship of a Mr. Smythson. But it had but a short existence in this reincarnation, and after Smythson's departure and a phase as Jessup's night eating-house, it became the headquarters of *The Echo*. Some interesting

playbills of the place under Phillipstall's *ægis*, and as a variety and an amateur theatre, are in existence, the latest entitled Pantheon Amateur Theatre, Catherine Street, Strand, "being dated April 11, 1842."<sup>1</sup>

### YORK STREET

Connecting Catherine Street with Tavistock Street, is the short thoroughfare known as York Street, which came into existence about the year 1636, and was so named after the Duke of York, afterwards James II. According to the earlier topographers, Strype and Hatton, it was in its early days a pleasant street, short but well-built, and containing the houses of people of some importance.

It is a long cry from those remote times, and as one passes along the street now it is difficult to visualise it as the one-time abode of fashion ; and it is far easier to imagine the "Fleece" at the corner where it joins Catherine Street, than the residence here of so respectable a person as Dr. Donne's son who, we are told, was residing in the thoroughfare four years after its formation.

The chief memory of York Street is that associated with Nos. 4 and 5, for long the well-known premises of Mr. G. H. Bohn, the bookseller and publisher, and afterwards those of his successors, Messrs. George Bell & Sons, now removed to Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mr. Bohn, whom I remember well, and who (I may state) gave me as a boy the first catalogue of second-hand books from which I ever made a purchase, started business in York Street in 1835, and continued it till 1866 when he transferred it to Messrs. Bell and Daldy, as the present firm was then called.

Bohn's Libraries, the first of their kind, extended to no fewer than seven hundred volumes, and the cost of this publication is said to have been about half a million pounds. The translations from the classics included in them, Bohn's cribs, as they were called, were a god-send

<sup>1</sup> These facts are drawn from Mr. Farlow Watson's interesting article.



to schoolboys, but were not so popular with their instructors—except, perhaps, when those instructors themselves found it convenient to refer to them.

But a greater interest attaches to Nos. 4 and 5 York Street than as the centre of a successful dissemination of books, for in the former house De Quincey once lived, and there in a back room, in the year 1821, wrote his amazing *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. One of the few friends he was accustomed to see during these years was Charles Lamb, who was living in the neighbouring Russell Court at that time.

The other house, No. 5, which had been absorbed into Bohn's premises, was the abode of another of Lamb's friends, Elliston, the actor, who lived here during the period of his lessee-ship of Drury Lane, and who produced Elia's not very successful play, *Mr. H.*, at that theatre.

Both these houses had large vaults, and there was a tradition that they covered a portion of an ancient burial-ground attached to the original convent here; certainly remains, such as stone coffins and so forth, have from time to time been unearthed in York Street, which seems to confirm the supposition. On the front of these houses was a stone tablet bearing the date of their erection—1636.

Besides these two notable residents, we know that Mrs. Pritchard, the actress, was living here at one time, certainly in 1756, on the March 13th of which year she advertised her benefit at Drury Lane, and gave York Street as her address.

It was in this street, in 1744, that Mr. Samuel Baker first established the great book-auctioneering firm which became later that of Messrs. Baker, Leigh and Sotheby, and later still of Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, and which is known to all the world as Sotheby's *tout court*, the literary equivalent of Christies; and curiously enough just as this firm migrated, in course of time, to Wellington Street, so did *The Spectator* change its office from Wellington Street to 13 York Street, where it is still, in the house which the late Mr. St. Loe Strachey told me once, he always considered was the identical

abode of Nell Gwynn. But Nell Gwynn lived in so many places, and seems to have been born in at least two !

The one remembered coffee-house in York Street was known as *Wrights*, which was flourishing during the first decade of George III's reign. It was the meeting-place of such men as Foote, Holland, Powell, and various other actors of the period. In Cradock's *Memoirs* are several references to Foote, one of which records a kindness done to a friend of the writer, by the actor who is here shown in an amiable and pleasant light not always associated with his character.

## CHAPTER VII

### BOW STREET AND ITS BY-WAYS

**I**F the reader will take the trouble to examine Rocque's plan of London (1746) or Horwood's (1799), he will see that, between Russell Street on the north, Drury Lane on the east, Brydges, or Catherine Street on the west, and the Strand on the south, there was an oblong area intersected by a number of small courts and alleys, some of which link up the encompassing thoroughfares and some of which are mere *culs-de-sac*, losing themselves in the interior of this section of Covent Garden's outworks. It is partly about these little tributaries from the main streams that I want to speak in this chapter.

A comparison between Rocque and Horwood will show certain changes that had taken place in this part during the half century that elapsed between the publication of their respective plans. Placed beside a contemporary plan the changes will of course be found far more startling and drastic.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference to be seen between Rocque's representation and Horwood's is the increased size of Drury Lane Theatre and the enlargement of the open space around it ; in the earlier plan it being shown hemmed in by buildings and approached by narrow passage-ways ; whereas in the latter its principal front is open to Brydges Street, and its north side to Little Russell Street, as it is to-day.

All this area has now been greatly changed, and those doubtful alleys and vice-haunted courts against which and their frequenters Gay warns the ingenuous youth of the period, have long since been swept out of existence.



## HART YARD

Running through the centre of this area, from east to west, was White Hart Yard which, as I have before said, took its name from the tavern of that name once standing at its west end. That tavern was of great antiquity, it being mentioned in the lease granted to Sir William Cecil in 1570, and therein described as "the Inne called the Whyte Harte"; and it seems fairly clear that it is this "White Hart" which is there referred to, and not the "White Hart" on the north-west of Covent Garden Market, from which Hart Street (now Floral Street) is said to take its name.

From White Hart Yard an alley ran down to the Strand called Swan Yard, which no doubt perpetuated another hostelry close by, at the Strand end of the lane; while out of Catherine Street Little Catherine Street communicated with New Bedford Court, Helmet Court, Eagle Court (which ran up to White Hart Yard, cutting through Little Catherine Street), and Windsor Court, all of which were small openings from the main thoroughfare, and were during the eighteenth century almost as notoriously vicious as Whetstone Park or Lewknor's Lane.

## HELMET COURT

Helmet Court was so named after a tavern which is found mentioned in a list of such places existing in the time of James I. It was here, as well as at the "Swan" close by, that kitchen ranges were set up at the cost of the Crown when the King of Denmark visited this country and was lodged at Somerset House opposite. The "Helmet" was once kept by a certain David de Monce, as an extant token testifies, and it is known that Henry Condell, one of Shakespeare's fellow-players, left property in this court to his widow. The present Gaiety Theatre stands on the site formerly penetrated by Helmet and Eagle Courts, Angel Court (another minor tributary) and Child Court, so called from the "Eagle and Child," a tavern mentioned by Hatton

(1708) as then being on the north-east side of Catherine Street.

But these by-ways, of which the annals, if they ever had any, are far to seek, really belong to the Strand, and are only on the outskirts of our present enquiry ; and it is to the area north of White Hart Yard, and between that passage and Russell Street that we must turn our attention.

### RUSSELL COURT

One would have liked to connect the pleasant figures of Charles Lamb and his sister with Russell Court which intersects this area, for it is otherwise destitute of any special association ; and once one might have thought it possible to do so, for Lamb writes in 1817 that he had moved from the Temple to No. 20 Russell Court. There is no doubt, however, that this was a slip of the essayist's pen, and that it was to No. 20 Russell *Street* that he and Mary went, and where, indeed, we shall find them when we come to that thoroughfare which possesses so many other notable memories. All I can, therefore, say of Russell Court is that it enjoys an incidental reference in the second number of the *Spectator*, and that in No. 444 of the same periodical, the following announcement appears :

“ In Russel-Court, over against the Cannon Ball, at the Surgeon's Arms in Drury Lane, is lately come from his travels a Surgeon who hath practised Surgery and Physick both by Sea and Land these twenty-four years. He (by the Blessing) cures the Yellow Gandice, Green sickness, Scurvey, Dropsie, Surfeits, long Sea Voyages, Campains, and Women's Miscarriages, Lying-In, etc., as some people that has been lame these thirty years can testifie ; in short, he cureth all Diseases incident to Men, Women, or Children.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among extant trade-cards is one of Spilsbury, an engraver in Russell Court, a charmingly ornamental production, of about 1770. It is reproduced (Plate 13) in Mr. Heal's book.





*From a water-colour drawing  
by T. H. Shepherd, dated 1857*

TOM'S COFFEE HOUSE





## “NEMO’S” BURIAL PLACE

There is one special association, in fiction, which many have asserted to belong to Russell Court, viz. the desolate churchyard in which “Nemo,” otherwise Captain Hawdon, of *Bleak House* was buried. This burial-ground, which was that attached to St. Mary-le-Strand, was entered by a narrow way on the north side of Russell Court, immediately opposite a turning on the south side, known as Red Lyon Court which linked up Russell Court with White Hart Yard. The evidence that this was the place which Dickens had in his eye when describing “the hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene” where Jo swept the steps and guided Lady Dedlack to them, and where Esther, at the last, found the dead body of her mother, seemed overwhelming, and there are, I think, those who still regard it as the actual site of those tragic fictitious happenings. But then the burial-ground attached to St. Clement Danes, off Portugal Street, on the south side, close to where King’s College Hospital stands, seemed to have an equal claim.

Both these places have disappeared, and so one can only rely on the memory of those living and comparing it with Dickens’s description, to arrive at the true spot. But now comes a third claim and one to which no less an authority than Mr. Walter Dexter has given his *imprimatur*. For it is now claimed that neither of the above-mentioned places is that which served as the model for the novelist’s description, but that the real spot was the burial-ground attached to St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields, still to be found, but now used as a children’s playground, called Drury Lane Gardens, which abuts on the west side of Drury Lane, a little north of the point where Russell Street joins it.

I shall have occasion again to refer to this spot when dealing with Drury Lane, but I would here humbly like to make a suggestion. And it is this : Dickens seldom kept to one original either in his localities or his personages. And is it not more than possible that he may have taken hints from all three burial-grounds and formed a composite picture from them for the purpose

of his description? If so then the various supporters of the three different *venues* may, like those who, in the apologue, argued as to the colour of the chameleon, be at once all wrong and all right.

### RUSSELL COURT

Returning to Russell Court and its adjacent burial-ground, I may remind the reader that the development of this area has swept away both, and that the latter was just at the back of the present Waldorf Hotel and Theatre, and that blocks of workmen's dwellings have arisen around the now paved-over spot; as may be read on a tablet on one of the walls, which runs: "A part of the forecourt, as well as the site on which this wall is erected, is a portion of the old burial-ground of the parish of St. Mary-le-Strand, and is vested in the Rector of the said parish. The north and south boundaries of the old burial-ground are indicated by red stones let into the foot pavement."<sup>1</sup>

Among the forgotten hostelries which congregated in this part, two were in Russell Court, probably on the site of the dwellings referred to above. One of these was known as the "Rose," the other as the "Star," and it was at the latter that Casanova describes sending for a number of girls from the neighbourhood, none of whom, however, was apparently to his taste.

### VINEGAR YARD

If we had been perambulating this area before all these little byways had been improved out of existence, or had been so altered as to be now well nigh unrecognisable, we should have been able to turn out of the north side of Russell Court into the tiny Cross Court which entered what was known in the eighteenth century as Vinegar Yard, linked up with Brydges Street by a narrow way called Little Brydges Street but subse-

<sup>1</sup> This inscription bears the names of F. Harcourt Hillesdon, M.A., Rector, and W. O. Reader, clerk, as well as the date, June, 1907.



quently rechristened Woburn Street. This Vinegar Yard was at an earlier date known as Vine Garden Yard or the Vineyard, and recalls a state of things very alien from the present brick and mortar covered area where a vine is no more likely to be met with than an aloe.

This particular alley was one of some antiquity, for according to the Rate Books it was in existence in 1621, and three years later the burial from here of an inhabitant, known as "Blind John, out of Vinegar Yard," is recorded in the register of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. Had this person enjoyed his sight, he would have seen some strange figures and occurrences in his vicinity. For Vinegar Yard was a disgraceful place, and Gay compares it, in his *Beggar's Opera*, with such notorious haunts as Hockley-in-the-Hole and Lewknor's Lane, the abode of thieves and prostitutes intermingled with those indigent authors whom Curll and other low booksellers employed. It thus, in spite of its unsavoury reputation, has a connection with literature, although that literature was hardly one to be proud of, and there is little doubt that some of the salacious productions which emanated from Curll's shop were evolved, and perhaps some of their incidents copied, from the doings which the writers had before their eyes in this low haunt. Anyhow, when Pope wrote his *Instructions how to find Mr. Curll's Authors*, one of them, "the schoolmaster with carbuncles on his nose," is placed by the poet at "the Hercules and Hell in Vinegar Yard"—probably a fictitious but characteristic name for one of the taverns here.

The place again enters into literature in the pages of *Roderick Random*, where the illiterate Clayrender writes it Wingar Yard, Droory Lane; while as Vin'gar Yard (for the sake of the metre) it is mentioned in the *Rejected Addresses*.<sup>1</sup>

As time went on the character of Vinegar Yard improved, and although it could never be said to be select, it was sufficiently respectable (it might perhaps easily

<sup>1</sup> I happened to know these facts, but as I see they are mentioned in *London Past and Present*, I am glad to be reminded of them by this short aid to the London enquirer.

have been that) for the club known as the "Eccentrics" to meet, after doing so in Chandos Street and before going to Tom Rees's in May's Buildings, at the "Crown" which was one of the few taverns recorded as being situated here. Here, too, in 1857, the Savage Club held its first meeting, before it blossomed forth into its own club-house.

But not for these associations is Vinegar Yard famous. Where it is differentiated from all other localities is in the fact that once in its long career it was inhabited by—a Whistling Oyster. You may find associative interest in nearly every street in London with the great, the beautiful, or the notorious; poets and players and politicians and painters are as thick as gooseberries in the city's thoroughfares; but there has only been one oyster endowed with sibilant properties, and that oyster was once to be seen—and heard—in Vinegar Yard, Drury Lane.

In *Old and New London* there is a woodcut of the tavern (it was named the "Whistling Oyster" in 1840) where this portent was on view, showing a large and graphic sign of the wonder. In that print a lady and gentleman (the latter being apparently Mr. Charles Dickens) are seen emerging from the "Whistling Oyster," the proprietor of which, a Mr. Pearkes, who had established himself here in 1825, can be observed standing just inside his premises. The account of the "bivalvular attraction" (as one feels sure George Augustus Sala would have called the thing, had he thought of it) given in *Old and New London*, is taken from the *Daily Telegraph*, and one seems to see the hand of one of Matthew Arnold's young lions—perhaps G.A.S. himself—in its lines. I will not inflict it on my readers, but may shortly state that one among other oysters in Mr. Pearkes's tavern, was, on one occasion, heard distinctly to whistle. The news spread abroad, and people flocked to hear for themselves. *Punch* reproduced a picture of the Oyster, and good things were said about it by the wits of the day, including Douglas Jerrold, who declared that it had been crossed in love and whistled in a spirit of careless bravado; while Thackeray

asserted that he was once in the place when an American came in, heard the oyster's performance, and turning contemptuously away, remarked : " That's nothing to an oyster I know of, in Massachusetts, which whistles Yankee Doodle, and follows his master about like a dog."

Of course the solution was that a minute hole in the shell caused the sound exactly resembling a whistle when the creature drew in or expelled the air. But it was a nine days' wonder, at a time when people were less sophisticated than they are now, and when a diving bell and a balloon caused intense excitement.

Vinegar Yard with its diverse memories is no more, but those who go along the covered way where the pit and gallery entrances to Drury Lane Theatre are now, are treading on a portion of the alley, and may perhaps in the intervals of motor traffic, hear a ghostly whistling from an intangible bivalve.<sup>1</sup>

#### CROWN COURT, ETC.

Of the other courts and alley shown here both by Rocque and Horwood, there is little to say. There was a *Pump Court* and a *Nelson's Court*, both *culs-de-sac* ; the former leading from White Hart Yard, the latter from Drury Lane. A *Cross Court* linked up Russell Court and Vinegar Yard, and a *Guys Court* joined the latter by-way with *Play House Passage*, then the chief entrance to the theatre from Drury Lane ; while *Faucon Court* was a small back-water, probably taking its name from an adjacent tavern, and debouching from the north-east side of Vinegar Yard.

To the north of Russell Street (and I continue my remarks about these subsidiary by-ways before dealing with that historic thoroughfare), the alleys and courts intersecting the block between Drury Lane and Bow Street were equally numerous and in one or two

<sup>1</sup> In the *Rejected Addresses* in " Fire and Ale," a parody on Monk Lewis's poetry, occur the lines :

" Oh ! then she look'd sour, and indeed well she might,  
For Vinegar Yard was before her."



instances were interesting ; and at least two or three of them—*Crown Court*, *Duke's Court*, and *Broad Court*, were sufficiently important for Horwood (1799) to give the numbering of the houses in them. During the half-century which elapsed between the execution of Rocque's plan and that of Horwood, various changes had taken place with regard to these thoroughfares. For instance, *Crown Court*,<sup>1</sup> which in the former is shown as quite insignificant, with only an outlet into Russell Street and another, by way of *Windsor Court*, into Drury Lane, has later developed in size, and has been provided with a way into Bow Street, instead of the narrower passage into Drury Lane, which appears to have been closed. The *New Broad Court* of Rocque has become the *Broad Court* of Horwood ; and has been opened out by the extension of Bow Street, hitherto a *cul-de-sac*, into Long Acre, by means of *Bow Court* ; while what had been merely *Jackson's Alley* has become dignified into *Russell Place*.

By 1816, *Broad Court* and *Duke's Court* are alone thought worthy of being depicted on a contemporary plan, although some of the subsidiary by-ways still clung to a dirty and squalid existence. To-day *Broad Court* has been further enlarged and remains the one more or less important means of communication through an area once riddled with smaller ones. I will therefore set down what there is to be said concerning this thoroughfare before touching on some of the others named.

### BROAD COURT

*Broad Court* now forms an easterly continuation of Floral Street, originally Great Hart Street. Its proximity to the two theatres not unnaturally caused it to be a favourite abode of actors, and here, according to O'Keefe, Quick, Lewis, and Wroughton were all living in the year 1777.

<sup>1</sup> Burn gives a halfpenny token of John Spicer in this Court, dated 1667. He assumes Spicer to have been a musician and thinks the token may have been to indicate one of the many music-houses flourishing at this time in that locality.

To come to later days, it was in the unpretentious lodgings of his father, in Broad Court, that Douglas Jerrold, after his two years' life at sea, settled in the year 1816, during which time he was working for a printer in Northumberland Street, Strand. By a curious coincidence Jerrold was again to be associated with this spot in later life, for here at No. 22, which stood at the corner of Bow Street, was the Wrekin Tavern where one of his many clubs—the Mulberries or the Mulberry Club—was wont to foregather, when the members read papers on literary subjects.<sup>1</sup> The name is apparently associated with Shakespeare's famous mulberry tree, and one of the club rules laid it down that "some paper or poem or conceit bearing upon Shakespeare should be contributed by each member, the general title being 'Mulberry Leaves.' " Another active member of the same fraternity was William Godwin. The "Wrekin" was originally kept by one Powell, a Shropshire man, who so named it after his native hill. It was a great resort of actors as well as of writers, and besides the Mulberries, two other clubs held their meetings here, namely, the Rationals and the House of Uncommons, at which debates were the order of the day interspersed by conviviality. After Powell's time the house was run by a gentleman named Harrold, who, according to Walford, was the scion of a good Herefordshire family, and who greatly raised the tone of the place. The same authority thus speaks of the tavern as it was at this time: "For about half a century, under his (Harrold's) management, the 'Wrekin' was the chosen resort of the most prominent celebrities of the day; and as wine was the only refreshment supplied to those who entered the coffee-room, the visitors were exceedingly select. The Kembles—John and Charles—and the principal members of that powerful company then collected at the neighbouring theatre, would constantly avail themselves of this handy histrionic hostel to snatch a pleasant hour from the night, after the cessation of their professional

<sup>1</sup> In Jerrold's *Cakes and Ale*, some of the results of these papers are given. Later the Mulberries became the Shakespeare Club, of which Dickens and his friends were members.

duties. The tavern shared the vicissitudes of the theatre, on which it was in some degree dependent, and nearly every change of management at the one house was followed by a change in the direction of the other. Mr. Warner, the husband of the celebrated tragic actress Mrs. Warner, was at one time the landlord, and Mr. Hemming, an esteemed actor at the Haymarket and the Adelphi Theatres, was another."

It was on Hemming's leaving the place that most of the more important frequenters also departed, and from 1842 the reputation of the "Wrekin" gradually declined until 1871, when it was pulled down and a block of houses raised on its site.

Another tavern at the corner of Broad Court, opposite Covent Garden Theatre, was the "Garrick's Head," where the "Judge and Jury," presided over by the famous "Judge" Nicholson, met. It stood on the site of the present police court, so should properly be regarded as in Bow Street, where, when we come to that thoroughfare, I shall again have occasion to refer to it.

There is a church in Broad Court, dedicated to St. John, and erected in 1850. It developed out of what had been known as the Tavistock Proprietary Episcopal Chapel, under which title it carried on its work for seventy years, having become a chapel of ease to St. Martin's in 1833. Twenty-two years later, on a new vicarage being instituted, it was consecrated and dedicated, a portion of St. Martin's parish being at this time carved out to form a new and distinct parish so far as ecclesiastical matters were concerned. In recent years the structure underwent various alterations and improvements. It contains a fine Jacobean pulpit which is said to have come from Penshurst Church, but in what way is not clear, as well as a stained-glass window presented to it by the Duke of Bedford. Like so much of London, Broad Court enters into the fiction (or fact) of Dickens; for here lived Mr. Snevellici. "I am not ashamed of myself," he exclaims on one occasion. "Snevellici is my name. I'm to be found in Broad Court, Bow Street, when I'm in town. If I'm not at home, let any man ask for me at the stage-door."



## CROWN COURT

Crown Court, to which I have already incidentally referred, is notable for two things : one, the fact of the former existence in it of another place of worship, known as the Scottish Church, where the Rev. John Cumming, who used to startle the credulous by foretelling the proximate end of the world (I remember as a boy being quite nervous at his predictions, of which I heard my parents speak), who ministered here from 1832 to 1879—two years before he died. Besides his prophetic efforts, Cumming was the author of several works which created a stir at the time, *Apocalyptic Sketches* (1849), *The Great Tribulation* (1859), and *The Destiny of Nations* (1864) among them. His church was afterwards pulled down, and another of the same character built in Russell Street—facing the stage door of Drury Lane Theatre.

The other notable event in the otherwise uneventful career of Crown Court (which by the way Rocque (1746) marks clearly) is the fact that in it once stood the Crown Tavern, and that it was here that *Punch* was inaugurated in 1841 ; the details of which are given in a little brochure containing the original prospectus drawn up on a sheet of blue foolscap paper by, if I remember rightly, Mark Lemon, the first editor of the famous periodical.

## MARTLET COURT

By the side of the police court in Bow Street is a narrow turning known as Martlet or Martlett Court. Small as it is it has its memories, and will go down to posterity embalmed in the *Rejected Addresses*, in the famous parody on Sir Walter Scott entitled “A Tale of Drury Lane.” Here it was that Shuter, the player, of whom Garrick said he was the greatest comic actor he had ever known, was living at No. 2 when he advertised his benefit in March 1756 ; while John O’Keefe and George Frederick Cooke also lodged in this court, respectively in 1779 and 1778. Thomas Dibdin, in his *Reminiscences*, records the difficulty he used to experience in getting Cooke home to his rooms after the chimes at midnight. But the most

surprising of Martlet Court's former inhabitants was Harriet Mellon, who here used to cook, we are told, choice little dinners for Mr. Coutts the banker, whom she afterwards married, and whose wealth combined with her own charm helped to bring her eventually into the peerage as Duchess of St. Albans.

### BOW STREET

Before I deal with Russell Street, that historically and otherwise important thoroughfare which extends from Covent Garden Market to Drury Lane, which it enters at a point immediately opposite what was formerly Princes Street, but has since been renamed Kemble Street, it will be convenient to trace the associations of a street hardly inferior to it in varied interest, I mean Bow Street. To-day Bow Street extends up to Long Acre, but in the earlier part of the eighteenth century it was a *cul-de-sac* in this direction, its north end branching off eastwards into New Broad Court, as can be seen in contemporary plans ; the narrow portion at its upper end being then known as Bow Court. Bow Street has long connoted the law in one of its manifestations, and anyone now saying he was going to Bow Street might well be understood (probably in nine cases out of ten would be understood) to imply that he was bound for the police court or even bound over to appear there if wanted.

In earlier times, however, the street, in common with so many in this neighbourhood, was not merely well-inhabited, but actually fashionable. In common, too, with most of the important thoroughfares here, it was formed in 1637, and is said by Strype to have been so named because it was in the shape of a bent bow. Unlike some attributions, this seems to be a quite probable one, especially as no other good reason for the name exists. When Strype wrote this, during the second decade of the eighteenth century, he was able still to describe Bow Street as being "open and large, with very good houses, well-inhabited, and resorted unto by gentry for lodgings, as are most of the other streets of

this parish.” But this atmosphere was not destined to remain long after this period, and by the end of the first quarter of the century, the thoroughfare had become deserted by fashion and only the ghosts of Dryden’s “Bow Street beaux” perambulated it.

Two things alone link up the past and present here, and those are both now exhibited in very different forms from what they were when our forefathers knew them—Covent Garden Theatre and Bow Street Police Court. With regard to the former I need say nothing here, as I deal with it, together with Drury Lane, in another chapter. But the police court is a different matter, and as one must begin with something, it will be convenient to say a few words about it before recalling the street’s other, and on the whole pleasanter, memories.

The present structure is really the fourth of the buildings which have housed the police court. The first (it was the property of Henry Fielding’s patron, the Duke of Bedford) was the home of the Fieldings, two of whom, the blind Sir John and his far more illustrious brother Henry, were once magistrates here. The exact site of this house was where Messrs. Lyons’s tea shop and the Opera Hotel (No. 33) are to-day. This police court, which had been established in 1748, continued in use till 1780, when it was destroyed by the Gordon Rioters. From an architectural point of view this was no great loss, for the place was quite an ordinary one, and nothing but its association with the majesty of the Law differentiated it from other houses in this thoroughfare. But as once the abode of Henry Fielding it had every claim to be preserved, especially as *Tom Jones* is said to have been wholly or at least partly written within its walls. As to this last fact, however, there is some question. It is known that Henry Fielding entered on his duties as a Justice of the Peace in December 1748, and that *Tom Jones* was published in the following February, so that all that can be said with probability is that the proof sheets may have been corrected here. However, this is enough to give fame to any place; and there is, besides, the possibility of Fielding having lodged in the house before it became his official as well as his private abode.



What is certain is that it was during his residence here, and when he was actively performing his duties as a magistrate, that he projected the publication of his *Covent Garden Journal*, the first number of which was issued on January 4th, 1752, a preliminary announcement running as follows : "All persons who intend to take in *The Covent Garden Journal*, which will be certainly published on *Saturday*, the 4th of January next, Price 3d., are desired to send their Names, and Places of Abode, to the above Office, opposite *Cecil Street*, in the *Strand*. And the said Paper will then be delivered at their Houses."

There is no necessity here to enter into the history of this famous periodical, for a delightful account of it has been left us by the late Austin Dobson, instinct with the accuracy and particularity for which his studies of this period are so well known. But in view of its editor's official duties and his abode in Covent Garden, the following advertisement is interesting : "All Persons who shall for the Future suffer by Robbers, Burglars, etc., are desired immediately to bring or send the best Description they can of such Robbers, etc., with the Time and Place, and Circumstances of the Fact, to Henry Fielding, Esq., at his House in Bow Street."

At this house the great novelist continued to live, when in London, till 1754, when he went to Lisbon, a dying man. His half-brother, Sir John, succeeded him here, and during the riots of 1780 his furniture was hauled into the street and there burned. In addition to these famous residents, this actual house or one earlier on its site has another notable association, for in it Edmund Waller resided for two years (1654-6), and here in the former year produced his panegyric on Cromwell. This original police court has, too, yet another link with our later literature, for it was to it that Barnaby Rudge was haled after the riots in which he was an innocent participator, and it was to Sir John Fielding that Mr. Haredale and the vintner from Holborn appealed for help, as readers of the novel (and who has not read it?) will remember.

After the Gordon Riots the original police court was

rebuilt on the same site, and served its purpose till 1825, when a still larger and more commodious one was erected on the same side of the street, about which more anon.

What kind of place the second court house was like may be seen in Rowlandson and Pugin's illustration included in *The Microcosm of London* (1809), where will be found an interesting account of the conduct of the office in those days, together with some references to, and quotations from, the works of Fielding in connection with his tenure of the magistracy here. It was this court which figures in the doings of the rakes of the Regency, the period which the works of Pierce Egan and other writers of that class of book describe with a substratum of truth but no doubt with no little literary embroidery.

The new police court, built in 1825, also figures in some of these annals, for the Georgian influence went on for another decade, and the real change in manners, if not in morals (which never change), took place when Queen Victoria's influence began to make itself felt. This third police court was erected on the opposite side of Bow Street, on the site of an old tavern known as the "Brown Bear"<sup>1</sup>; and it was used till 1881, when the old court-room was let to Messrs. Garcia, Jacobs, and Co. for the purpose of holding their sales of fruit, vegetables, and flowers. It was this police court that figures in *Oliver Twist*, when the Artful Dodger was here committed for trial, on which occasion, it will be remembered, that precocious young gentleman, in reserving his defence, remarked, "This ain't the shop for justice; besides which my attorney is abreakfasting this morning with the Vice-President of the House of Commons; but I shall have something to say elsewhere, and so will he, and so will a wery numerous and respectable circle of acquaintances, as'll make them beaks wish they'd never been born."

According to George Augustus Sala "it had changed

<sup>1</sup> There seem to be few associations recorded of this place, but it existed into the nineteenth century, and here, in 1809, George M. Woodward, a caricaturist, died and was buried at the cost of the landlord.

little, if at all, since Dickens described it in *Oliver Twist* and dwelt upon the general air of greasiness and of dirt which hung about it and which seemed more or less to choke and stifle the faculties and perceptions of all who were engaged in its business, from the Chief Magistrate himself down to the doorkeeper." "It was," he adds, "in truth, an evil old place, and it is therefore perhaps pleasant to know that it will soon be swept away." The last case tried there was that of a boy, one Patrick McCarthy, who had stolen some wood.

One cannot visualise the old Bow Street Police Court without calling to mind the *Bow Street Runners*, or *Robin Red-Breasts*, as they were called, in consequence of their wearing red waistcoats. The most famous of these Bow Street officers was Townsend, whose portrait Deighton has left us, but others were well known in their day, such as Leadbetter, Goddard, Ruthven, and Keys, who acted as a kind of combined detectives and policemen, and must have been found very necessary at a time when the watchmen or Charleys were the sole, and inadequate, guardians of the public peace. With the coming of Sir Robert Peel's "Bobbies," these functionaries disappeared, and London began at last to be properly guarded by day and night. From all accounts the "Bow Street gemmen," as Byron calls them in *Beppo*, were as much law-breakers at times as peace-preservers; and their disappearance was a distinct gain to the Metropolis.

The new police court, erected at a cost of £40,000 from the designs of Mr. John Taylor, was opened on the opposite (west) side of Bow Street, and in more recent times this structure has been rebuilt on ampler lines still. The site on which it stands is an interesting one, because here (it was No. 4) formerly stood that notorious Cock Tavern kept at one time by a woman known as "Oxford Kate." It was a favourite resort of Wycherley, who lived opposite in a house in which on one occasion he, when ill, was visited by Charles II. He had married the Dowager Countess of Drogheda, probably the most unfortunate event of his life, and so jealous was she of her illustrious husband, that she used



to watch, from her Bow Street house windows, those of the Cock Tavern, in order to see what company he kept.<sup>1</sup> Besides these marital troubles his marriage alienated the interest the King had previously shown in the poet and his doings. However, the lady died, and shortly before his death Wycherley married again, this time a certain Miss Elizabeth Jackson, one of the co-heiresses of Mr. Joseph Jackson of Hertingfordbury, and all he had to leave he bequeathed to her by a will only executed in Bow Street two hours before his death which occurred on December 31st, 1715. It is probable that Pope's first acquaintance with Wycherley was made in this house.

But to return to the "Cock," one of the untoward incidents associated with the place was that when Sir John Coventry, having just left it on his way to his home in Pall Mall, on the night of December 21st, 1670, was waylaid and his nose slit to the bone, as recorded by Sir Walter Scott in his *Life of Dryden*, an incident which brought about the passing of the Coventry Act.<sup>2</sup> It is recorded by Burnet that the wound was so well dressed that the scar was afterwards scarcely noticeable. The fact is that during a debate in the House of Commons relative to a proposed tax on playhouses, a proposal strenuously opposed by the Court party, Sir John had asked: "Whither did the King's pleasure lie, among the men or the women who acted?" and Charles II is said to have instigated the revenge taken on the too outspoken knight.

But by far the most notorious circumstance connected with the "Cock" was that which occurred here in the year 1663. Hither one day in the summer of that year, came Sir Charles Sedley, Lord Buckhurst, and Sir Thomas Ogle. The bottle passed briskly and before long the trio were all (and in view of their subsequent behaviour it is only fair to remember the fact) hopelessly

<sup>1</sup> Dennis says, "If he were at any time with his friends, he was obliged to leave the windows open, that the lady might see there were no women in his company, or she would be immediately in a downright raving condition."

<sup>2</sup> Under this Act any person committing such a mutilation was to suffer death.

drunk. Sedley, who appears to have taken a leading part in the affair, first stripped himself, the others following his example. They then went out on to the balcony, and after exposing themselves in all sorts of fantastic attitudes of an indecent character and going through performances not usually associated with publicity, they proceeded, at least Sedley did, to harangue the crowd which had gathered below, in mixed terms of obscenity and blasphemy. To such an extent, indeed, did they go, that even the low denizens of the neighbouring slums, who formed the larger part of their audience, were so scandalised and disgusted that they made an attack on the tavern with the object of wreaking vengeance on the three young fools, and it was only after a long and desperate fight that Sedley and his companions effected their escape from being probably torn to pieces. They were duly apprehended, however, by the authorities and were carried off to prison. They were subsequently brought up at the Court of Common Pleas before Lord Chief Justice Foster and a full Bench, when, and I can here quote Pepys, "my Lord and the rest of the judges did all of them round give him (Sedley) a most high reproofe; my Lord Chief Justice saying that it was for him and such wicked wretches as he was that God's anger and judgment hung over us, calling him sirrah many times. It seems they have bound him to his good behaviour, there being no law against him for it, in £5000." Anthony à Wood, in giving fuller details of the trial, records some of Sedley's impudent and indecent replies to the judges. Although Pepys does not mention the fact, Sedley and his two friends were heavily fined. Being unable to pay they employed Henry Killigrew to try and persuade the King himself to get the fine remitted. But Charles was far too astute to interfere with the machinery of the law, and he very properly refused to do anything of the kind, whereupon the culprits had the audacity to suggest that the money should be forthcoming from the Royal Exchequer; and if it can be believed the easy-going monarch agreed to this.

During the seventeenth century this thoroughfare was





*After a water-colour drawing  
by T. H. Shepherd, dated 1837*

BUTTON'S COFFEE HOUSE





apparently the centre of some anti-Royalist plots, for in the Calendar of State Papers for September 9th, 1661, there is recorded the statement of one Jos. Bilcliff, to the effect that "William Parker was set up by Major Wildman to keep a victualling house in Bow Street, and there was a great Commonwealth Club set up where 80 persons, including Harry Martin, Hasslerigg, and others, constantly met, and that Col. Bishop lodged here when Lord Mordaunt and Dr. Hewitt were on their trials."

Later we read that Parker then kept the Nonsuch, formerly the Commonwealth Club, and that he and his wife were Wildman's servants. These entries, like so many in the same records, indicate that the informers were on the look out, in this district, for the meetings in taverns here of disaffected persons.

Another tavern, on the west side of the street, was originally known as the "Red Cow," and later as the "Rose" before it blossomed into fame as Will's. It occupied the site at the north corner where Bow Street is intersected by Russell Street, and it took its name from the landlord William Unwin. When John Timbs was writing his book on the Clubs and Taverns the house was, he says, numbered 23 and then occupied as a ham and beef shop.

The "Garrick's Head," which occupied part of the site of the present Bow Street Police Court, was, I am inclined to think, a sort of lineal descendant of the "Cock." Its chief memory is that here the Judge and Jury Society were accustomed sometimes to meet. This mock tribunal was presided over by Renton Nicholson, the rather disreputable editor of a paper called *Town*; and a curious advertisement of these meetings, no doubt drawn up by their protagonist, indicates that Nicholson had an eye to business as well as to the providing of facetious entertainment. For at the end the reader is told that bed-rooms can be had at 1/6, "Breakfast with eggs or a Rasher of Bacon 1/3. Dinner and Nic-Nacks from 1 o'clock. A hot joint always at six," and it concludes with the words, "The Lord Chief Baron presiding 1/6," so I suppose this fee was expected to be paid in addition to those for food and accommodation. The

" Garrick's Head " was a favourite resort of the actors of the time of William III's reign and after, and one of Jerrold's clubs, the Rationals, met there at one time.

It was the advent of coffee-drinking in the reign of William III that caused Unwin to turn the tavern into a coffee house. In those days such centres largely took the place of our modern clubs, and Will's has descended to posterity in this way in a manner it would never have done had it merely been a tavern or a coffee house of the ordinary description. It is not too much to say that one man made it what it was, and that that man was Dryden. One can hardly now tell anything that has not been told before about the association of the poet with this meeting-place of wits and fine gentlemen. Just as Ben Jonson had gathered together the choice spirits of his time at the " Devil " in Fleet Street, and as Addison was to do so after Dryden's death at Button's, so here at Will's " glorious John " ruled as a literary monarch.

You had to mount to the first floor to find the room which he frequented. If it was in winter-time he would be discovered seated by the fire ; if in summer then his chair would be at the corner of the balcony overlooking Bow Street. Around him would be his special friends or such visitors as had an introduction to him ; while in other parts of the room were small tables at which groups sat, listening to the remarks that fell from the great man's lips, and which, as is not infrequently the case with literary as well as non-literary people, were not always as brilliant as one might have supposed or as the unsophisticated might have expected. It was a sort of literary court and the dictator sat supreme and generally unchallenged. I say " generally," because Dean Lockier has left an incident on record which shows that at least on one occasion the oracle proved fallible.

" I was about seventeen," writes Lockier, " when I first came up to town, an odd-looking boy, with short rough hair, and that sort of awkwardness which one always brings up at first out of the country. However, in spite of my bashfulness and appearance, I used, now



and then, to thrust myself into Will's, to have the pleasure of seeing the most celebrated wits of that time, who then resorted thither. The second time that ever I was there, Mr. Dryden was speaking of his own things, as he frequently did, especially of such as had been lately published. 'If anything of mine is good,' says he, 'tis "Mac-Flecno"; and I value myself the more upon it, because it is the first piece of ridicule written in heroics.' On hearing this I plucked up my spirit so far as to say, in a voice just loud enough to be heard, 'that "Mac-Flecno" was a very fine poem, but that I had not imagined it to be the first that was ever writ that way.' On this, Dryden turned short upon me, as surprised as my interposing; asked me how long 'I had been a dealer in poetry'; and added, with a smile, 'Pray, Sir, what is it that you did imagine to have been writ so before?'—I named Boileau's *Lutrin* and Tassoni's *Secchia Rapita*, which I had read and knew Dryden had borrowed some strokes from each. ''Tis true,' said Dryden, 'I had forgot them.' A little after, Dryden went out, and in going, spoke to me again, and desired me to come and see him the next day. I was highly delighted with the invitation; went to see him accordingly; and was well acquainted with him after, as long as he lived."

Another and a greater man than Lockier, was also first introduced to Dryden at Will's. This was Pope, who, as a youth, persuaded some friends to take him to the coffee house so that he might in after times be able to say he had seen the poet. Pope describes him as "a plump man with a down look, and not very conversible"; while yet another first-hand description, this time from Colley Cibber, was that he was "a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's." But this was at the time of Dryden's decline. Pepys at a much earlier period knew him here, and on one occasion writes that one night he went into the Great Coffee House, as he calls Will's, "Where Dryden the poet (I knew at Cambridge) and all the wits of the town, and Harris the player and Hoole of our college. And had I had time then, or could at other times, it will be good

coming thither, for there I perceive is very witty and pleasant discourse. But I could not tarry, and, as it was late, they were all ready to go away."

Unfortunately the Diarist does not appear to have had, or made, another opportunity of going to Will's ; at least there is no mention of a subsequent visit in the Diary.

On the other hand Swift, who, however, was no gentle critic and often allowed his humour to get the better of his judgment, once said that the worst conversation he had ever heard in his life was at Will's. But then he never was there under Dryden's regime, and after all professed wits can on occasion be very dull dogs.

Dryden died in 1701, but so great had been his impress on the place that for a decade later Will's was known as the Wit's Coffee House, and both Ned Ward in 1703 and Macky in 1722 thus term it. But the former was not greatly impressed by what he heard there, and records that although there was much company there was little talk.

In its earlier days Will's was a centre of lampoons and libels, and their authors had an ingenious way of disseminating these effusions in order to avoid the risk of detection and the probability of a slit nose or even worse. For there was a certain drunken fellow called Julian, who dubbed himself Secretary to the Muses ; and he was wont to frequent the coffee house and there distribute the satires and scurrilities which their authors had previously entrusted to him for this purpose. Julian's name finds a place in *Poems of State*, and Scott<sup>1</sup> has described him, so that even his low office brought him fame of a sort. He had a successor named Summerton, who went mad, and after this the practice of producing lampoons gradually died a natural and not-to-be-deplored death. Bays in *The Hind and the Panther Transversed* speaks of the manner in which such things were written in those days of direct and indirect personalities.

Will's is embalmed in the pages both of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, and both Addison and Steele, as well as other notable contemporaries affected it, till the first-

<sup>1</sup> Scott's reference in *The Pirate* to Dryden at Will's is classic.

named transferred his allegiance to Button's, from which time the reputation of the place gradually declined. About the middle of the eighteenth century it had ceased to exist as a coffee house, and Spranger Barry, the once well-known actor, is described as living in the house that had once been the most famous of coffee houses.

But that house was to have two far more illustrious occupants even than the successful histrion, for here Charles and Mary Lamb came to reside when the place was numbered 20 and 21 Russell Street.<sup>1</sup>

It was in the autumn of 1817 that Charles Lamb and his sister left their former lodgings at No. 4 Inner Temple Lane (although Charles had written to Manning that he meant to live and die there) and moved to what he calls "No. 20 Russell Court, Covent Garden East," as he gives the address to Haydon, adding that "the house was half-way up, next the corner, left-hand side," and again he elsewhere describes his new domicile as "the corner house delightfully situated between the two theatres." But as Hutton<sup>2</sup> remarks, this description better fits in with 20 Russell Street than with any house in the Court. Mr. E. V. Lucas in his *Life of Lamb* merely says that he and Mary "moved to Great Russell Street in 1817," and there seems little doubt that Lamb made a mistake in giving his address as Russell Court. Horwood shows No. 20 Russell Street as fulfilling the description given by Lamb; while certain remarks in a letter from Mary Lamb to Dorothy Wordsworth, dated November 21st, 1817, help to confirm it. "Here we are," she writes, "living at a Brazier's shop No. 20, in Russell Court, Covent Garden, *a place all alive with noise and bustle, Drury Lane Theatre in sight from our front and Covent Garden from our back windows.*"<sup>3</sup> The hubbub of the carriages returning from the play does not annoy me in

<sup>1</sup> Although thus technically in the adjoining thoroughfare, I can speak of Lamb's residence here, now; because the corner house in which he lived was as much in Bow Street as it was in Russell Street.

<sup>2</sup> *Literary Landmarks of London.*

<sup>3</sup> The italics are mine. This exactly coincides with the position of No. 20 on Horwood's plan, and could not possibly apply to Russell Court in any way.



the least—strange that it does not, for it is quite tremendous. I quite enjoy looking out of the window and listening to the calling up of the carriages and the squabbles of the coachmen and link-boys. It is the oddest scene to look down upon.” As a postscript to this same letter Charles himself adds : “ We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres with all their noises. Covent Garden dearer to me than any Garden of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and ’sparagus. Bow Street where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four and twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working, and casually throwing out her eyes, she saw a concourse of people coming this way, with a constable to conduct the solemnity.”

Here it was that Lamb wrote his earlier essays under the *nom de guerre* of Elia ; and here he and his sister in their rooms on the first floor used to hold those Wednesday evening meetings at which so many notable people assembled and which Talfourd and others have described. It is a curious fact that Lamb, with his knowledge of, and interest in, the older London, should not have mentioned the fact that Will’s famous centre of wits was once domiciled in the house in which he was living, or that Spranger Barry resided there at a later time.

Mary Lamb speaks of their being “ over a Brazier’s.” This was one Owen whose ironmonger’s shop occupied the ground-floor in those days. Earlier still even in the days when Will’s was here, a portion of the ground-floor of the premises had been used for commercial purposes, and in 1693 it is known to have been occupied by the shop of one Philip Brent, a woollen-draper ; while in 1722, James Woodman, a bookseller, had it and carried on business here under the sign of the “ Camden’s Head.” In recent days this historic building was demolished and rebuilt, and was in use as a fruiterer’s shop.

In a house next door to that occupied by the Lambs once lived the notorious Edmund Curl ; while a little

further up the street, at No. 6, was the residence of Robert Wilks the actor, who himself built the house which adjoined Covent Garden Theatre, and here lived till his death in 1732. Wilks is remembered for his gentle bearing and instinctive grace of demeanour, and was in consequence generally known as "Gentleman Wilks." Colley Cibber, in his *Apology*, pays him a handsome compliment in this respect. It was just ten years after the actor's death that his house was taken jointly by Macklin, Garrick, and Peg Woffington—a wonderful histrionic trio ! The three appear to have superintended the domestic details of the establishment in turn, and it is on record that Dr. Johnson once heard Garrick blaming Mrs. Woffington on account of the strength of the tea she had served. Johnson, no doubt, drank it without a murmur !

Other notable people, in addition to those already mentioned, have lived at various times in Bow Street ; and at least one illustrious one was born here, notably Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, on October 5th, 1661. Here resided Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in a house on the west side, but apparently for only a short time, notably from 1684 to 1685. He was the poet and wit of whom Addison once wrote in the *Spectator* "that the late Lord Dorset had the greatest wit tempered with the greatest candour, and was one of the finest Criticks as well as the best Poets of his Age." It is therefore a regrettable fact that as Lord Buckhurst, he should have been involved with Sedley in the Cock Tavern incident. But he outlived that youthful escapade, and came to be thought well of by most men and even to earn the praise of Pope.

Bow Street in those days boasted a very catholic set of inhabitants. Literature and art, politics and medicine, were all represented here ; and in addition to those histrions I have named, that Mohun, who had been a soldier and became an actor (Pepys calls him "the best actor in the world"), lived in a house on the east side during the years 1671 to 1676. Two years after Mohun had left Bow Street a far more illustrious man came to reside in it. This was the incomparable wood-carver

and sculptor, Grinling Gibbon, who had a house about the centre of the east side from 1678 till his death in 1721. This house was known by the sign of the "King's Arms"; and a catastrophe occurred to it during Gibbon's occupancy, which is thus described in the *Postman* for January 24th, 1702. "On Thursday the house of Mr. Gibbon, the famous carver, in Bow Street, Covent Garden, fell down; but by a special Providence none of the family were killed; but 'tis said a young girl, which was playing in the court<sup>1</sup> being missing, is supposed to be buried in the rubbish." Gibbon rebuilt the house, and probably lived in lodgings in the neighbourhood during the process. We know that at an earlier time, when he was carving the statue of Charles II for the Royal Exchange, he was residing in the Piazza, Covent Garden, as he received a patent from the Crown to sell engravings of the statue, which were said to be on view at his house there.

A notable contemporary of the sculptor's who also lived in Bow Street was Dr. John Radcliffe, whose residence stood on part of the site of Covent Garden Theatre, and was indeed demolished when that structure was first erected in 1732. Here the famous physician lived from 1687 till 1714, the year of his death, although this event did not actually occur here. Radcliffe's name is forever preserved in the noble library he founded at Oxford, for which he left the munificent sum of £40,000. His was a curiously complex character, and many are the stories told of his outspokenness, his amazing skill in diagnosing a case, his successful treatment of William III, his refusal to attend Queen Anne in her last illness (the fact was he was too unwell himself to do so), and other traits which made him at once respected and disliked. The curious will find some interesting anecdotes concerning him in *The Gold-Headed Cane*, a mine of medical memorabilia.

Among other seventeenth-century residents in the

<sup>1</sup> As Gibbon's house was at the corner of what was known as King's Arms Court, it is possible that it is this place that is here indicated. King's Arms Court is not shown by Rocque or Horwood, but may be identical with Duke's Court.



same thoroughfare was that William Longueville who is only remembered as the friend of Samuel Butler, who, it will be recalled, lived and died in the neighbouring Rose Street.

Another representative of art, besides Grinling Gibbon, in Bow Street, was Marcellus Laroon, the Dutchman who came to this country, and after living in Yorkshire, settled in London, where he began by painting the draperies for Kneller's figures. Afterwards he executed portraits and what were called "conversation pieces," with much skill, and he published the designs for a book on fencing, a series of Cries of London (now his best-remembered work), and the "Coronation Procession of William and Mary." It was in his house in Bow Street, "three doors up, on the west side," where he lived from 1680 till his death from consumption in 1702, that he produced most of his artistic work.

It is said that Dr. Johnson once lodged in this thoroughfare. He may have done so, although I confess I have not been able to confirm the statement. Johnson's London abodes were numerous and are now pretty well known, but I have not discovered that Bow Street was among them. He had, as we have seen, at least one friend living here, and he may have stayed with him on some occasion ; we know, too, that he frequented Will's, but that is the nearest connection between him and this street that I have discovered. On the other hand an almost equally famous person did live here. This was Sir Roger de Coverley, as he himself tells us in the *Spectator* for June 20th, 1712. And after all he seems to us as real as any of those actual ones who have made the street notable.

Among the past memories of this thoroughfare was an exhibition of signboards arranged by Bonnell Thornton "at the large rooms at the upper end of Bow Street, nearly opposite the Play House passage," and therefore on the east side of the street. It was inaugurated as the Society of Sign Painters, and was opened on the same day as the Royal Academy exhibition, being intended as a sort of skit on the official function ; Hogarth was one of the contributors to it.

In addition to those already referred to, there was another tavern in Bow Street, once kept by Charles Johnson, one of Pope's victims in *The Dunciad*, during the earlier years of the eighteenth century. Probably Johnson only ran the place for a short time before his death which occurred in 1741. I have failed to find any other records of this particular place of entertainment and even its name has eluded me. It was probably only of importance as being at one time linked up with the fortunes of one who but for Pope might have now been wholly forgotten.

To-day the Police Court, the Opera House (Covent Garden Theatre), and the east end of the Floral Hall are the chief features of Bow Street, none of them specially picturesque or attractive features, it must be confessed. Of these the last-named is the only one that here requires a word or two of description.

It was in a house on part of the site of the Floral Hall in Bow Street that Dr. Radcliffe lived ; just as Kneller's residence in the Piazza was at its western extremity ; hence the contiguity of their respective gardens concerning which the well-known incident I have already ventured to repeat occurred. It may be, too, that a portion of the ground on which the hall was erected was once occupied by the "Two Golden Balls," where Franks, in 1690, held his concerts, before moving to Charles Street. However that may be, Floral Hall was a late comer to Bow Street, for it was only opened in 1860, on March 7th of which year a Volunteer Ball, under Royal patronage, was given here, for the purpose of inaugurating the building, an illustration of which event appeared in the *Illustrated London News* at the time.

As I have to my hand a description of the place written by Walford, or at any rate included in his *Old and New London*, I will transcribe (although it makes rather a long extract) what he says about the structure, which, however, I am sorry to find him describing as "elegant."

"It was intended," writes Mr. Walford, "as the realisation of a long-cherished scheme on the part of Mr. Gye, namely, to establish a vast central flower-

market, for many years a growing desideratum in the metropolis. An opportunity was at last presented by the rebuilding of Covent Garden Theatre, after its destruction in 1856 ; and it was decided to carry out Mr. Gye's favourite plan, by erecting an arcade on the south side of the new Opera House.

“ The ground-plan of the building may be described as resembling two sides of an unequal triangle, the principal entrance being by the side of the Opera House, in Bow Street, at the end of the longer side of the figure, while the other opens upon Covent Garden Market, on the side of the Piazza. The public footway of the Piazza is continued along the Covent Garden entrance, in the shape of a gallery roofed with glass and iron. The main arcades run in a direct line from the entrances, and are surmounted at the point of junction by a lofty dome of fifty feet span, which forms an imposing object in the view. This dome, as well as the roofs, is principally composed of wrought iron ; the arches, columns, and piers are of cast iron ; the frontage, both in Bow Street and the Piazza, is of iron and glass, of which the entire structure is principally composed, brickwork forming but a very small part of the composition. The utmost length of the arcade, from the Bow Street entrance to the west wall, is 227 feet ; and the length of the shorter side, from Covent Garden Market to the wall of the theatre, is nearly 100 feet. The total height, from the ground to the top of the arched dome, is rather over 90 feet. Each of the main arcades is 75 feet wide, and has a side aisle between the main columns and the wall, 13 feet in width and 30 in height. The entrances are both elegant and simple, the doorways being so deeply recessed as, in conjunction with the richly designed iron arches which give admission to the interior, to obviate the flat appearance which generally characterises buildings of glass and iron.

“ The interior is fully equal in lightness and grace of design to the exterior. The columns which support the roof are of cast iron, with richly ornamented capitals, the latter perforated, in order to ventilate the basement beneath, with which the hollow columns communicate.



The ground having been excavated beneath, the principal floor forms a basement of the same area as the building above it, and sixteen feet in height, the floor of the arcade being supported by cast-iron columns.

“This building was, as its name implies, designed for a flower-market, and was expected to prove a boon to the many florists and nurserymen scattered among the outskirts of London, but has never fulfilled the purpose for which it was erected. . . . It has since been employed principally, if not solely, for concerts during the season.”

To these details may be added the fact that the hall was designed by E. M. Barry, and that a south wall of brick was built at the close of the year 1888, after the houses to the south as well as part of the east Piazza had been demolished and at the time when the market was enlarged.

Duke's Court was one of the turnings out of the east side of Bow Street, and at its corner stood a tavern known as the “Queen's Head, of which, however, no records of permanent interest survive.

From Bow Street we reach our eastern limit, Drury Lane, by way of the Russell Street of innumerable memories.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RUSSELL STREET AND DRURY LANE

THE importance of Russell Street, as one of London's arteries, does not lie only in the fact that it once had many notable inhabitants, for that characteristic it shared in common with other adjacent thoroughfares, or that it contained several coffee-houses whose names are still remembered as eighteenth-century landmarks, but because for long it remained Covent Garden's chief highway, by which the denizens of the West End reached the Opera House and could, if they wished, proceed to the further east. It was, besides, a few years older than the neighbouring streets, having been formed in 1634, and so may be regarded as an integral portion of the nucleus of this part of the town of which Covent Garden Market is the heart. For over a century Russell Street was to London something analogous to what St. James's Street was later and to some extent is now. For its coffee-houses were among those places which anticipated the clubs of later days, and so even when the street had declined as a residential quarter, its vogue still remained as a centre where the fine gentleman from the west met the literary men and artists who still lived in this vicinity or came hither from less well-inhabited parts further east.

So much has been written about coffee-houses, their rise and popularity, the famous men who congregated in them and the place they occupied as centres of news and gossip, chiefly during the eighteenth century, that it would be superfluous for me here to harp on this much-thrummed string. As most people know they came into existence in this country about the middle of the seventeenth century, the earliest being opened in

Cornhill, in 1652, and a few years later they had become the rage everywhere. The *Spectators* and *Tatlers* printed the facts, or the fictions based on facts, which Addison and Steele had picked up in these resorts ; just as to-day the gossip in the newspapers is to some extent based on the talk in the clubs. And these centres had this in common with our clubs, that whereas if anyone told a bit of news to anyone else in the street, it might or might not be regarded as authentic or worth repeating ; if that same item of intelligence was propounded inside a coffee-house or (as now) a club, the greatest credence was (and is) immediately given to it. It is one of those curious traits in humanity, showing (as so much else in life shows) the importance and value of environment.

The fact of the coffee-houses shedding so much lustre on the annals of Russell Street is a good and sufficient reason for dealing with them, before turning to the record of such notable people as once lived here. Of these coffee-houses, two were of the first importance : Button's and Tom's, for I have already dealt with the equally famous Will's when describing Bow Street, although as it stood at the corner of that thoroughfare and Russell Street, and apparently had entrances in both, it might equally well have been discussed here.

Tom's Coffee House was situated on the north side of Russell Street, on the site of No. 17, and was first opened in 1700 by a certain Captain Thomas West, and as a proof of how soon it became a well-known resort, we find Rowe, in the epilogue to his *Tamerlane* (1703), alluding to it in conjunction with the much earlier established Will's.

The vicinity of the theatre made Tom's, in company with the other coffee-houses and taverns in Covent Garden, a great place of resort, and Macky, in his *Journey through England* (a work, by the way, often attributed wrongly to Defoe), remarks that " After the play the best company generally go to Tom's and Will's Coffee Houses near adjoining, where there is playing at Picket, and the best of conversation till midnight. Here you will see blue and green ribbons and Stars sitting familiarly, and talking with the same freedom as if they



had left their quality and degrees of distance at home."

This was written in 1722, and it was in that year that the proprietor of Tom's, Captain West, threw himself from a back-window on the second floor of his premises and was instantly killed. A fit of delirium occasioned by gout is said to have caused the tragedy.

As in the case of Will's, Tom's coffee-house occupied the upper portion of the building, the lower being let to one T. Lewis, a bookseller, who, in 1711, published Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. It was to Lewis, it will be remembered, that Gibbon applied for a priest to assist him when he was about to go over to the Roman Church. Lewis, a Roman Catholic himself, recommended a Jesuit named Baker, and was subsequently examined by the Privy Council concerning this incident, as recorded in Gibbon's *Autobiography* and Lord Sheffield's notes to this particular passage.

In 1727 we find *The Craftsman* being printed by R. Francklin, who describes his premises as being "under Tom's Coffee House, in Covent Garden." At the upper windows, with their balconies, were to be seen such frequenters as were not engaged in reading the news-sheets or in playing cards, and Mr. Thomas Grignion, Senr. (who lived at No. 7 Russell Street, where he was a watchmaker<sup>1</sup>), remembered to have seen them "crowded with noblemen in their stars and garters, drinking their tea and coffee, exposed to the people."

By the way, Grignion had another memory of Russell Street which he imparted to J. T. Smith, and which I may here interpolate, in the latter's words :

"My friend the late Mr. Thomas Grignion, of Russell Street, Covent Garden, informed me, that as Mr. Wilkes was passing the house in which he then lived, in a hackney-chair, his father tapped at the window to him, which notice Mr. Wilkes returned by kissing his hand ; but he had not gone three yards before he ordered one of the chair men to go to the gentleman who had tapped at the window, and inform him that he wished to speak

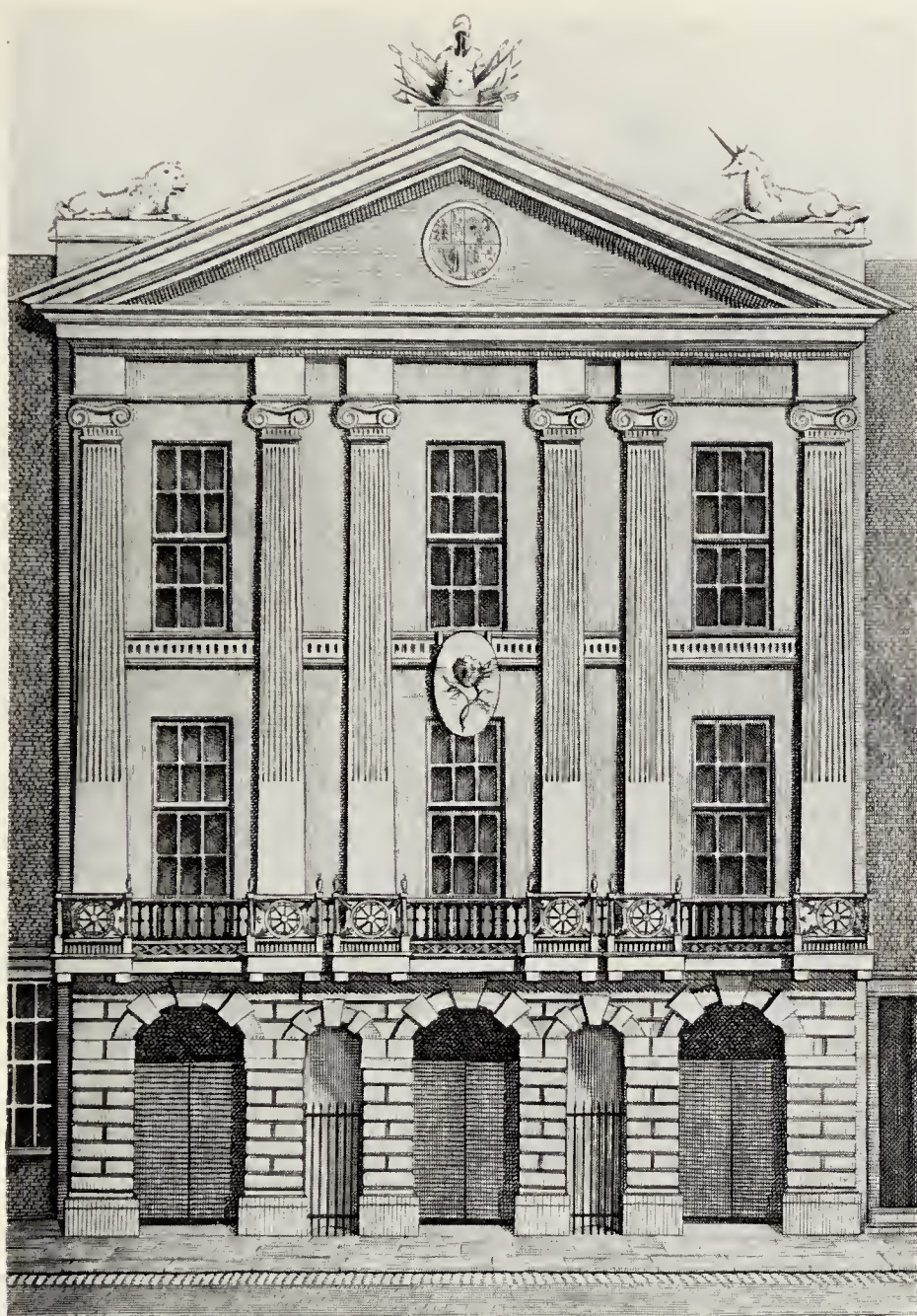
<sup>1</sup> His brother Charles, the well-known engraver, lived at 27 James Street.

to him. Mr. Grignion immediately went to him, and was addressed in nearly the following manner. 'Grignion, you are intimate with Sir John Fielding. I am going to him on a very singular business, will you accompany me?' 'Certainly,' he replied, 'let me fetch my hat.' They went, and Mr. Wilkes, to the great astonishment of his friend, addressed the sitting-magistrate, Mr. Spinnage, Sir John Fielding being absent, to this effect. 'Sir, *I demand a warrant* to arrest the persons of the Secretaries of State, by whose order my bureau, desk, and escritoire, have been broken open, and all my papers seized!' 'God bless me!' said Mr. Grignion; 'friend Walker, you are another John'—'Whom do you mean? John Hampden?' 'No; John Lilburn,' he rejoined.—'*Well it's all one,*' observed Wilkes. Mr. Spinnage, however, refused to grant the warrant."

It is a curious fact that although Addison and Steele are known to have frequented Tom's, there is but a solitary reference to the place in the pages of the *Spectator*. But it was the resort of so many famous men, Fielding and Smollett, Colley Cibber, and Dr. Mead, who used the place as a sort of consulting room and was accustomed to write prescriptions for his patients here, that it can afford this omission. At a later time, too, it had an added importance given to it by being selected as the meeting-place of a club. This association was formed in 1764, and consisted of no fewer than seven hundred members—"the nobility, foreign ministers, gentry, and men of genius of the age," says Timbs. The large room on the first floor was used for cards; but so considerable was the attendance that this, in course of time, was found insufficient, and four years later Thomas Haines, who was then the proprietor, acquired the front room of the house on the west side, for the purposes of a coffee-room; an adjoining apartment being used as a lounge or as we should now say a smoking-room, where the members could sit about and talk.

When Timbs was writing his history of clubs, he had access to the subscription-books of this one, and is thus able to give a more or less complete list of at least the





*From a print dated 1794*

COVENT GARDEN THEATRE  
Shewing the Adam's Front.





principal members. Among these were "Long" Sir Thomas Robinson; Foote, Arthur Murphy, and Garrick, representing the stage; Sir Richard Glyn and Mr. Robert Gosling, bankers; Lord Percy and the Duke of Montagu; the famous Lord Clive, and the popular Lord Granby; the Duke of Northumberland, and the Earl of Anglesea, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith, and Dr. Dodd of unhappy memory; Colman, the dramatist, and James Paine, the architect; Sir W. Wolseley and Lord Gage; Sir George Rodney (later Lord Rodney of naval fame) and Sir F. B. Delavel; with an etcetera that reads like an eighteenth-century *Who's Who*.

This nameless club only occupied a part of Tom's, which was always a regular coffee-house, at which a dish of chocolate cost sixpence. Haines, the proprietor, was a man of such distinguished manners that members of the Club called him "Lord Chesterfield." On his death, his son carried on the business, and he possessed a portrait of himself by Grignion and one of his father executed by the elder Dance.

Tom's continued more or less in a flourishing way till the year 1814, when it ceased to exist, the premises then being taken by Till, the once well-known numismatist. Till, in his *Descriptive Particulars of English Coronation Medals*, thus describes the historic premises which had become his headquarters: "The house in which I reside (17 Russell Street, Covent Garden) was the famous Tom's Coffee House, memorable in the reign of Queen Anne, and for more than half a century afterwards: the room in which I conduct my business as a coin dealer, is that which, in 1764,—by a guinea subscription among nearly seven hundred of the nobility, foreign ministers, gentry, and geniuses of the age—was made the card-room and place of meeting of many of the now illustrious dead, and remained so till 1768, when a voluntary subscription among its members induced Mr. Haines, the then proprietor (and the father of the present occupier of the house), to take in the next room westward, as a coffee-room; and the whole floor, *en suite*, was constructed into card and conversation rooms."

On the death of Mr. Till, he was succeeded both in

the tenancy of this house as well as in the business of a coin dealer, by Mr. Webster who, however, removed to 6 Henrietta Street (where we have already met him), and the premises once occupied by Tom's were then taken down and rebuilt. Webster was the son-in-law of Till, and through this relationship he became possessed of some interesting memorials and relics of Tom's which had belonged to the older man.

Among these were the original books of the Club which met here, as well as the snuff-box which it was customary to hand round at the meetings. This box, made of tortoise-shell, bore in silver relief portraits of Charles I and Queen Anne, and a representation of the oak tree among the branches of which Charles II is seen hiding, beneath being a plate bearing the name of its owner, Thomas Haines.

The original building which housed Tom's was demolished in 1865, and the National Deposit Bank was erected on its site.

The other outstanding Coffee-House in Russell Street was Button's, which was opened about a dozen years later (*circa* 1712) and which proved a dangerous rival to the older-established place. It was so named after its proprietor Button, who had once been in the service of Lady Warwick and whom that lady's second husband, Addison, established here, in a house described as "over against Tom's, near the middle of the south side of the street."

It is needless to say that with his *protégé* as mine host, Addison made the place his regular haunt ; indeed he is as much associated with it as Jonson had been with the Devil Tavern or Dryden with Will's. He was its presiding literary genius, and here he gathered round him that band of famous men whose names make up the glory of the Augustan Age of our literature : Pope and Swift and Steele, Dr. Arbuthnot and the unfortunate Savage, Colley Cibber and Ambrose Philips, Martin Folkes and Eustace Budgell, and Dr. Garth. Hither too came a certain Count Viviani, and even Jemmy Maclaine, the fashionable highwayman, dared to flaunt his meretricious splendour in the tavern.



An anecdote has survived concerning the last-named gentleman's presence at Button's. It was told to Mr. John Taylor, the editor of the *Sun*, by the Mr. Donaldson who figures in it. It appears that this gentleman had observed Maclaine paying special attention to the barmaid at Button's, and aware of his character, he imparted the fact to the girl's father who in turn warned his daughter; she, however, repeated the matter to Maclaine himself. The next time that Donaldson came to Button's he encountered Maclaine, who shouted out, "Mr. Donaldson, I wish to spake to you in a private room." Donaldson, being unarmed and quite aware of the subject on which the highwayman required him, replied that there was nothing that could not be said publicly, and absolutely declined to enter a private room with Maclaine. "Very well," exclaimed the latter, "we shall meet again." A day or so later, as Mr. Donaldson was walking near Richmond in the evening, he caught sight of Maclaine on horseback; but before the highwayman saw him, a carriage came along, and the gentleman of the road turned his attention to it and its occupants. Meanwhile Donaldson made his escape, fairly certain that had he been observed he would have been shot on the spot.

Another frequenter of Button's must have hesitated to haunt the place, if he knew what was in store for him, for it was here that Ambrose Philips hung up a rod over the seat generally occupied by Pope who had unmercifully criticized the *Six Pastorals*, which the lesser poet had published while still an undergraduate at Cambridge, and which had appeared in Tonson's *Miscellanies* in 1709, the same year in which Pope had brought out his *Pastorals* in the same collection. It need hardly be said that when the quarrel between Addison and Pope occurred, Philips was a keen supporter of the older man. Indeed for a variety of reasons Pope does not seem to have been a *persona grata* at Button's, and on one occasion Gay told Garth that everyone was pleased with the poet's translation of Homer, except a few at Button's; and he said to Pope himself, "I am confirmed that at Button's your character is made very free with, as to morals, etc."

It was an age of personalities, and in such centres as these criticism was not confined to a man's works.

At the risk of being tedious, I must set down here two extracts, one of which shows that, in the opinion of at least one contemporary, Pope brought about his own discomfiture. The first is contained in a letter from Colley Cibber to the poet himself :

"When," he writes, "you used to pass your hours at Button's, you were even there remarkable for your satirical itch of provocation ; scarce was there a gentleman of any pretension to wit, whom your unguarded temper had not fallen upon in some biting epigram, among which you once caught a pastoral Tartar (Philips is here alluded to), whose resentment, that your punishment might be proportionate to the smart of your poetry, had stuck up a birchen rod in the room, to be ready whenever you might come within reach of it ; and at this rate you writ and rallied and writ on, till you rhymed yourself quite out of the coffee-house."

It is but fair to give Pope's own version of the Philips matter, and here it is, in a letter written by him to Secretary Craggs :

"Mr. Philips," he says, "did express himself with much indignation against me one evening at Button's Coffee-house (as I was told), saying that I was entered into a cabal with Dean Swift and others, to write against the Whig interest, and in particular to undermine his own reputation and that of his friends, Steele and Addison ; but Mr. Philips never opened his lips to my face, on this or any like occasion, though I was almost every night in the same room with him, nor ever offered me any indecorum. Mr. Addison came to me a night or two after Philips had talked in this idle manner, and assured me of his disbelief of what had been said, of the friendship we should always maintain, and desired I would say nothing further of it. My Lord Halifax did me the honour to stir in this matter, by speaking to several people to obviate a false aspersion, which might have done me no small prejudice with one party. However, Philips did all he could secretly to continue the report with the Hanover Club, and kept in his hands

the subscriptions paid for use to him, as secretary to that Club. The heads of it have since given him to understand, that they take it ill. . . . This is the whole matter ; but as to the secret grounds of this malignity, they will make a very pleasant history when we meet."

The hanging up of a rod by Philips recalls the suspension of a more harmless and better-remembered object, at Button's, by Addison himself. This was the famous *Lion's Head*, a letter-box into which contributors to the *Guardian*<sup>1</sup> were desired to place their lucubrations.

In 1828, Mr. Charles Richardson, into whose possession the Lion's Head had come, published a pamphlet, entitled *Notices and Extracts relating to the Lion's Head which was erected at Button's Coffee House in the year 1713*, and from this some details concerning it are here taken. The idea of it was suggested to Addison by the lions at Venice into whose mouths public and private accusations were placed by anonymous informers, and in Nos. 71, 85, 93, 114, 142, and 171 of the *Guardian* will be found references to it, in this connection, written either by Steele or Addison himself. Richardson's pamphlet is largely occupied with extracts from these.

"Whatever the Lion swallows," writes Addison, "I shall digest for the use of the public. This head requires some time to finish, the workman being resolved to give it several masterly touches, and to represent it as ravenous as possible. It will be set up in Button's Coffee-house in Covent Garden ; who is directed to show the way to the Lion's Head, and to instruct any young author how to convey his works into the mouth of it with safety and secrecy."<sup>2</sup>

A little later we are informed that the Lion's Head had been actually set up, and correspondents of that periodical are requested immediately to supply it with food. A request which appears to have been complied with to the full satisfaction of Addison and Steele, if

<sup>1</sup> The *Guardian* was started in 1713 as a kind of successor to the *Spectator*, and contained many contributions by Steele, its editor, and Addison. But it never reached the excellence of its prototype.

<sup>2</sup> The *Guardian*, No. 98.



we are to judge by other later references to the subject.

Richardson's pamphlet contains, as a frontispiece, an engraving of the leonine letter-box, and it certainly looks fierce, and "ravenous" enough to swallow anything. The animal's claws grasp a tablet on which are inscribed two lines, but not consecutive ones, from Martial's *Epigrams*; the first being taken from the twenty-sixth, and the latter from the twenty-eighth, epigram in Book I. They run as follows :

"SERVANTUR MAGNIS ISTI CERVICIBUS UNGUES  
NON NISI DELECTA PASCITUR ILLE FERA."

In a satire published in 1717, and entitled *Town Assemblies*, the Lion and the frequenters of Button's are thus referred to :

"I now proceed, to famous Button's go,  
Here's Lion rampant with his glitt'ring show ;  
The curious view the Head-piece with delight,  
And many an Ass surveys the tawdry sight ;  
Here Politicians in their grandeur sit,  
The Statesman, Owl, the Buffoon and the Wit ;  
The Fate of Empires is with ease decreed,  
What Prince shall reign, what Tyrant now shall bleed  
When Sweden's king shall from the Czar be freed,"

and so on ; poor stuff, but characteristic of much which then passed for poetry.

The subsequent history of the Lion's Head, which is said to have been designed by Hogarth, although Austin Dobson says nothing about it in his biography of the artist, is as follows :

It was subsequently removed to the Shakespear Tavern, in the Piazza, at Covent Garden, then kept by a Mr. Tomkyns, and thence for a time it was removed to the Bedford Coffee House immediately adjoining, and there put to its old use by Dr. Hill when he was editing the *Inspector*, a paper in imitation of the *Spectator* and *Guardian*, but as far below those periodicals as Hill, who was openly accused of conceit and literary ignorance, was below Addison or Steele in literary merit. Later it was taken back to the Shakespear Tavern, and when

in 1769 Tomkyns was succeeded in the proprietorship of that tavern, by Campbell, who had been one of his waiters, it remained with him till the sale of his effects in 1804, when it was purchased by Mr. Richardson, Senior, for £17 10s., and he bequeathed it, on his death in 1827, to his son, the Charles Richardson before mentioned. That gentleman removed it to his house in Golden Square, and there it remained till it was bought, by the Duke of Bedford, who had it placed in Woburn Abbey.

I have questioned the attribution of the Lion's Head to Hogarth, but the great artist has left some sketches of certain illustrious frequenters at Button's, of which the authenticity is in no doubt, and which form very valuable artistic documents of the appearance of these great ones in their lighter hours.

These sketches, originally executed in Indian ink, are reproduced in Ireland's *Graphic Illustrations of Hogarth*, published in two volumes, in 1794. They were drawn by Hogarth in 1720, when he was but twenty-three. The first one represents David Button himself, and in the accompanying letterpress Ireland relates that "it was not an uncommon practice of a celebrated Middlesex justice of the peace, one Giles Earl, a creature of Sir Robert Walpole's, to examine culprits in the public room (at Button's) for the entertainment of the company which at times became so numerous as to render it necessary to open a new coffee-house in the neighbourhood." By the way, Ireland is very inaccurate about other details. Thus he goes on to say that Tom's was instituted after Button's, and also that it took its name from "a waiter at Will's named Thomas Irvin"!

Hogarth's second sketch contains portraits of Addison and Martin Folkes, the mathematician and antiquary; while in Plate III we have Dr. Arbuthnot, a specially valuable portrait as it is the only one known to exist of that learned and skilful practitioner. In this plate is, too, a figure which Horace Walpole identifies as that of Count Viviani. In Plate IV, both Pope and Dr. Garth appear.

Button died somewhat suddenly on the morning of

Sunday, October 5th, 1731, after but three days' illness. He had been a pew-owner at St. Paul's, having paid two guineas for two seats in Pew 18, as is recorded in the Vestry Books for 1719.

After the death of Addison, and Steele's retirement from London, the coffee-house declined, and Button is even found receiving an allowance from the parish. But apparently he carried on, even if unsuccessfully, till his death. The building subsequently became a private residence, and it is interesting to remember that it was in it that Mrs. Inchbald lodged in 1787. It was while here that she translated a number of French plays, and succeeded in selling, for two hundred pounds, her *Simple Story*, which she had written when living in Frith Street, Soho, some years previously. As her next recorded residence was at St. George's Row, Hyde Park, in 1810, it is probable that she remained in Russell Street a considerable time.

Russell Street had, however, already a literary flavour, apart from the presence of famous authors at Button's and Tom's, for when John Evelyn came up to London with his wife and family, on September 10th, 1658, he took lodgings here at a house bearing the sign of the Three Feathers.<sup>1</sup> Here he remained during the whole of the ensuing winter, and he was then labouring under much anxiety on account of his son who, he tells us in his Diary, was very unwell at the time.

But an even more important literary event took place in this street than the presence of Evelyn in it, for it was here, in the shop of Tom Davies, the Bookseller, at No. 8, that the historic first meeting of Johnson and Boswell occurred.

It is impossible to record this tremendous incident—for think, had it not happened, we might never have had the greatest of all biographies—without repeating Boswell's own account of it: "At last," he writes, "on Monday, the 16th of May (1763), when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into

<sup>1</sup> Burn gives a token issued by John Hatten, bearing a prince's plume as a device, and standing for the Three Feathers.



the shop, and, Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, he announced his awful approach to me somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord, it comes !' I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from a portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, soon after he had published his Dictionary, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated ; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell him where I come from.' 'From Scotland,' cried Davies roguishly. 'Mr. Johnson,' I said, 'I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it, . . . . This speech was somewhat unlucky, for with that quickness of wit, for which he was so remarkable . . . he retorted, 'That, Sir, I find is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help'."

Boswell never forgot the incidents of that momentous interview, and elsewhere in his *Life*, he says, "The very place where I was fortunate enough to be introduced to the illustrious subject of this work deserves to be particularly marked. It was No. 8. I never pass by without feeling reverence and regret."<sup>1</sup>

I have already noticed Lewis, the bookseller to whom Gibbon applied for a Roman priest, but there was yet another bookseller in Russell Street who is notable in an indirect way, for it was at Barker's bookshop that Lamb purchased the copy of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Plays*, concerning which he has such delightful things to say in one of his *Essays of Elia*.

In Strype's time Russell Street was a fine and broad one and was then inhabited by tradesmen, as the topographer himself tells us. But, although never, apparently, being as fashionable as some of the adjacent

<sup>1</sup> Tom Davies's shop was on the south side opposite Tom's, and was later the Caledonian Coffee House. Davies had started business in Duke's Court. He moved to Russell Street, in 1762, where he became bankrupt sixteen years later.

thoroughfares, it could boast the presence of a few notable people. Evelyn, we have already seen lodging some months in it. But in addition to Evelyn we find that Carr, Earl of Somerset, whose complicity in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, is set forth in that curious and scarce work, *Truth brought to Light by Time*, lived in a house, on the north side of the thoroughfare, in 1644, but died in the July of the following year, although whether in this house or not I am unable to say.

Another seventeenth-century resident in this street was Joseph Taylor, who was one of the original actors in Shakespeare's plays ; and another theatrical figure here was that Major Mohun mentioned already who was here in 1665, and who was apparently living in one of the more important houses, as his rate was the highest in the street. But a far greater actor than either was also once a resident here, in the person of the remarkable Thomas Betterton who not only lived, but died here in 1710, his collection of books and prints, etc., being sold on the premises shortly after.

Among tradesmen whose shops were in Russell Street was one James Raynolds, a haberdasher, "At the Hand and Pen," who issued an engraved trade-card, a representation of which is given by Mr. Heal in his book on the subject ; and Mary Long, whose token bearing the emblem of a rose is recorded by Burn, was probably the proprietress of a small coffee-house, as Burn quotes a notice, from the *Post-boy* for February 25th, 1699, that "tickets for a lottery were to be had at the Rose coffee-house, by the play-house."

There was one other tavern in Russell Street at a later date which helped to carry on its literary tradition,<sup>1</sup> this was the "Albion," which occupied the site of No. 26, and continued as a favourite resort of theatrical people until late in the last century, but which will, perhaps, be best remembered as the house where the Hook and Eye Club used to meet, before it moved to Clunn's, in the Piazza.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Armstrong, the poet, died in Russell Street, in 1779.

One sometimes finds Russell Street described as Great Russell Street. This arose from the fact that in its earlier days the western portion from Bow Street to the Market was known as Great Russell Street, and that part from Bow Street to Drury Lane, as Little Russell Street. It was not till 1859 that these distinctions were discarded, and the whole thoroughfare named Russell Street, *tout court*.

### DRURY LANE

Through Russell Street we reach our eastern limit—Drury Lane, and Drury Lane is one of those thoroughfares that have passed from the height of fashion to that inchoate state in which so many streets in a much changing environment, at long last, find themselves. As I have before stated, its southern end originally branched off into Wych Street (although a direct way due south to the Strand was provided by a passage called Little Drury Lane), and although Wych Street is with the past, having been swallowed up by Aldwych, that thoroughfare interests us here for in it stood the mansion from whose owners Drury Lane took its name.

This house was at first known as Drury House, and it stood at the south-east corner of Drury Lane where it used to join Wych Street. At a later time the mansion was re-named Craven House, and a small *cul-de-sac*, called Craven Buildings, perpetuates its later title. It has been generally supposed that the earlier house was erected by Sir William Drury in the sixteenth century, but it seems more probable that it could claim a still longer existence and that it was built by Sir Roger Drury in the preceding century. It is possible, however, that Sir William made such important additions as to convert it into an almost new house.

When in his turn Sir Robert Drury, that "gentleman of a very noble state, and a more liberal mind," as he has been called, possessed the place, he here received Dr. Donne, allotting him "an useful apartment in his own large house in Drury Lane." Here the Doctor and his family lived, and here Donne had his "vision" of his wife "with her hair hanging about her shoulders,



and a dead child in her arms," as described by Walton in his *Life* of the poet, at the moment when Mrs. Donne, then in Paris, had given birth to a dead infant. Another visitor to Drury House, was Bishop Hall who, besides being an ecclesiastic, was a writer of satires of no little merit. In course of time Drury House passed to Sir William Craven who rebuilt it, in 1620, from the designs of Balthasar Gerbier ; but it was subsequently destroyed by fire, and Captain Wynne or Wynde (who designed Buckingham House, and was a pupil of Gerbier's) was selected by Lord Craven, Sir William's son, to rebuild it.

Lord Craven was a notable soldier and distinguished himself at the Battle of Kreuznach ; but his greatest glory lies in the fact that during the Plague he heroically remained in London and by his active philanthropy (he erected a Lazaretto in Pest House Fields, near Golden Square), did what was humanly possible to mitigate the horrors of that awful visitation. He is, besides, remembered as the devoted servant (some say he was actually married to her) of the unfortunate Queen of Bohemia. He arranged for her residence next door to Craven House in a mansion he had erected, when Craven House itself was rebuilt after the fire, and which was in consequence known as Bohemia Palace.<sup>1</sup>

The gardens of Craven House extended up the east side of Drury Lane, and here Lord Craven would walk and talk with such men as John Evelyn, and John Ray the naturalist ; no doubt occasionally paying Covent Garden Market a visit. In 1723 these gardens were cut up for building purposes and Craven Buildings, among other erections, were raised on their site. On the wall of these buildings there used to be a large fresco representing Lord Craven on horseback, but eventually it was obliterated, after having been several times repainted. Craven House itself gradually fell on bad times, was let out in tenements, and finally pulled down early in the nineteenth century, when the Olympic Theatre was erected approximately on its site, by Astley, in 1805.

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account of Drury (or Craven) House and its owners, see the author's *Private Palaces of London*.

A portion of old Craven House was later converted into a tavern called the "Craven Head," it forming part of the domestic offices of that mansion. At one period the tavern was kept by William Oxberry the actor and theatrical editor; in 1851, Robert Hales, "the Norfolk Giant," as he was called, was the landlord, he having taken it after his return from America where he was "shown" by Barnum. Hales not only created a sensation in the United States, but in Europe he had a great success—a success crowned by his being presented to Queen Victoria who gave him a gold watch; and to Louis Philippe who is not recorded as having given him anything. He died in 1863. Beyond these facts the "Craven Head," a relatively modern hostelry, possessed no special history.

Another tavern close by was the old "Cock and Pie," which was situated at the top of Maypole Alley, facing Craven House gate, a spot where the lodgings of Nell Gwynn are said to have stood. In the autumn of 1890 two picturesque old houses here were demolished. The more southerly one was the "Cock and Pie," and its neighbour was the abode of Nell of Old Drury, as she has been "dramatically" called. Here it was that Pepys, on May 1st, 1667, saw her standing at her door, "in her smock sleeves and bodice," and remarks how "she seemed a mighty pretty creature." Dr. Philip Norman<sup>1</sup> states that, after 1838, George Stockley, the bookseller, occupied the house and was quite satisfied that it had been the actual abode of Nell Gwynn, as was Edward Solly, the antiquary, who wrote a paper on this subject in *Notes and Queries*. The two old houses dated from the time of Charles I.

Although rather outside our area, I must say a word about the Olympic Theatre, as it was in a sense the lineal descendant of Drury House. Astley obtained a lease of sixty-one years from the then Lord Craven, at a ground rental of £100 a year (what would be asked for the site to-day!), and a stipulation that not less than £2500 should be spent on the proposed play-house. It is said that Astley purchased the timber of an old French

<sup>1</sup> *London Vanished and Vanishing.*

man-of-war which had been taken in one of Nelson's sea-fights, and with it constructed the framework of his theatre ; another version of the story being that the said timber had once formed part of a vessel on which Prince William (afterwards William IV) had been a midshipman and that it, together with a chandelier, was given to Astley by George III.

The Olympic was opened on September 8th, 1806, and if we are to judge by a picture of it by Winston, with Astley seated in a gig and apparently seeing that the workmen were doing their job properly, it must have been a curious-looking place. Astley never made a success of it ; indeed he lost money over the venture, and in 1812 he sold it to Elliston for £2800. Under the new management it had varying fortunes, and then Egerton took it in 1822, to be succeeded ten years later by Madame Vestris, who carried it on till 1839 when George Wild tried his hand at management here, but as he soon after gave it up to Mrs. Brougham who passed it on to Delafield, it cannot be said to have been in those days a very successful house. In 1848, when a Mr. Watts had taken the place, a fire broke out (on March 29th) which destroyed it in the space of an hour owing to the large amount of woodwork used in its construction. However, it was rebuilt, from the designs of F. K. Bushill, on more modern lines, and so quickly that it was reopened on the following December 26th. From 1850 to 1853 William Farren carried it on, until Horace Wigan took it over for a few years. Then from 1857 Messrs. Robson and Emden were the proprietors till 1863, after which in our own days (I remember it was the first theatre to which I was taken) Benjamin Webster, Ada Cavendish (who married Frank Marshall and made such a hit as Mercy Merrick in *The New Magdalen*) and the good-looking Henry Neville, ran it successively and successfully. The Olympic, with so much else which one remembers in this neighbourhood, went down in the holocaust produced by the Aldwych-Kingsway improvement.

This diversion has rather carried us away from Drury Lane to which we must return, remembering, in view



of the improvements to which I have just alluded, that Drury Lane was once, in its earliest state, known as *Via de Aldwych*, and was the ancient highway from the Danish village of Aldwych to the Hospital of St. Giles in the Fields. At a later period (temp. James I) of its career a portion of its length was called Princes Street. At this time an Act was passed for the paving of the thoroughfare, and that it needed it is proved by the statement then made that it had "of late years by occasion of the continual rode there, and often carriages, become deep, foul, and dangerous to all that pass those ways"; which at least proves that even then it was a busy and much-frequented street. Not yet, however, had it become, as it later did, a fashionable thoroughfare, for although, in 1615, Lady Cope came to live here, the reason for her doing so, as set forth in the *Calendar of State Papers*, indicates that it was but an economical one: "April 6. 1615. Lady Cope has sold her house in the Strand, and is removing to a smaller one of £30 a year in Drury Lane, the result of making too great a show before!"

A second extract from the same source preserves the name of another householder here in James I's reign: "July 1618 Petition of Edward Fort, the King's servant, to the Council, to direct the Sheriff to forbear the pulling down of two fair houses, built by him in Drury Lane, begun by him during Mr. Ittery's patent for building Drury Lane. Has paved the street before his doors, according to Command, for three years past." From this an interesting fact emerges, namely, that Drury Lane as a regular street of houses owes its existence to a hitherto unknown Mr. Ittery.

Under the first two Stuarts Drury Lane may be said, in the favourite words of Strype, to have been well-inhabited. Indeed it was then the home of several illustrious people. Of these one of the earliest to be recorded was Sir Arthur Chichester, or as he had become, Lord Chichester, of Rawleigh, who in 1624 is found telling the Duke of Buckingham, in a letter, that two Spanish Ambassadors had been to visit him in his

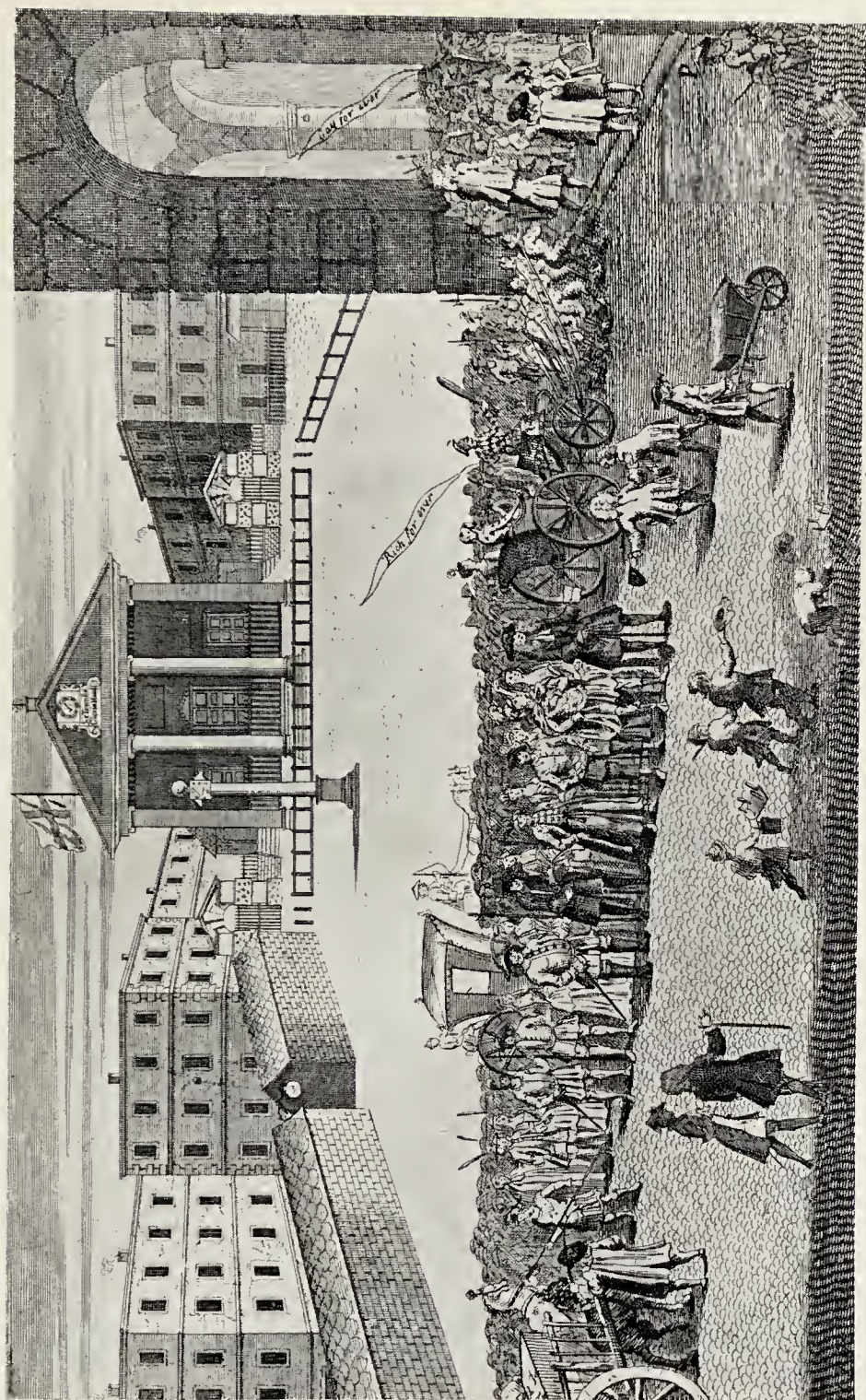
house in Drury Lane ; and that they were in an appropriate environment is shown by a remark made in the House of Commons, on June 25th, 1628, by a Mr. Whittaker, who in the course of a speech, stated that in Drury Lane for every Protestant family there were three Papist, "insomuch," he added, "that it may well be called *Little Rome*."

About the same time there was living here that Lady Jacob who is mentioned by Wilson in his *Life of James I* in connection with an intrigue she is said to have been engaged in with the Conde de Gondomar, the well-known Spanish Ambassador, whose efforts to bring about the so-called Spanish Match, between Prince Charles and the Infanta, are matters of history. Lady Jacob does not otherwise appear to have been notable, except that she married, *en secondes noces*, Christopher Brooke, one of the lesser poets of the period.

That somewhat peripatetic person who, by the way, was also a poet, Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, whom we have met with in St. Martin's Lane, where he was living in 1631-32, and whom we have again encountered in the Piazza, is also shown by the Rate Books as being a resident in Bow Street from 1634 to 1637. The neighbourhood of Covent Garden seems to have suited him, although once at least he went beyond it when he lived for a time, during the year 1632, in what was then Military Street, but is now Leicester Square.

But greater figures than these once made Bow Street notable, for here lived the famous 1st Marquis of Argyll, his residence synchronizing with that of the Earl of Stirling. Argyll was one of the outstanding figures of the day, but even he is not the most illustrious of Bow Street's past inhabitants ; for at one time Oliver Cromwell took lodgings here. This, according to Carlyle, was in 1646, a period of storm and stress after Marston Moor and Naseby had shown his capabilities as a military leader, and when Charles I was engaging in that triple intrigue with the Presbyterians, the Independents, and the Scotch, which finally resolved itself into his placing himself in the hands of the last at





*From a print by Hogarth, dated 1752*

RICH'S GLORY, OR HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO COVENT GARDEN





Newark. One can imagine that Cromwell's residence in Bow Street was one of activity, and many must have been those who came to his rooms here to confer on the situation and the trend of events. Unfortunately we have no records of such gatherings, only the simple knowledge that Cromwell was once a resident in Bow Street four years before another well-known seventeenth-century figure was born in it, in the person of Nell Gwynn. But, unfortunately, this attractive little lady's birthplace (if she was not born at Hereford, as is sometimes asserted) was in that part of Drury Lane which lies outside our present purview, notably near the Coal Yard, and close to Holborn, so that she and her doings here before she was old enough to fend for herself in the lodgings near Maypole Alley, where Mr. Pepys saw her standing at her door, and all the rest of it, must be left to those who deal with the more extended area than I, in this book, am able to do.

But a contemporary lady, of a very different character, although one who in her day was almost as famous or notorious, which you will, once lived in Bow Street. This was Anne Clarges who from being the daughter of Clarges, the blacksmith in Maypole Alley, in the Strand, then the wife of Thomas Radford, the milliner, in the New Exchange, became Duchess of Albemarle after having "got up" the linen of her future ducal husband.

The fact is that in Drury Lane extremes met. Here the peerage was represented by the Earl of Clare and the Earl of Craven and the Earl of Anglesea (from 1669 till his death in 1686)<sup>1</sup>; while close by all sorts of unimportant residents began to give the street an indifferent reputation, which, as we shall see, culminated at the beginning of the eighteenth century. From its early days as a regular thoroughfare it possessed a theatrical atmosphere. The presence here of the Cockpit Theatre before the coming of the Drury Lane playhouse, was sufficient to account for this; and so we find such well-remembered players as John Lacy, the comedian, living two doors from Lord Anglesea's house, from 1665 till his

<sup>1</sup> Lord Anglesea's residence was near Cradle Alley, off Bow Street, a by-way I have not been able to identify.

death here on September 17th, 1681. Lacy was not merely a successful actor, he was the original Bayes of *The Rehearsal*, but was also a dramatist; and it was while living here that his *The Old Troop* was first performed on July 31st, 1668. Pepy's *Diary* is full of allusions to him. Lacy had been brought up as a dancing master, and so naturally excelled, as Pepys tells us he did, in any part where Terpsichorean aid was essential. On one occasion he played in a piece called *The Change of Crownes*, by Ned Howard, taking the part of a "country-gentleman come up to Court, who do abuse the Court with all the imaginable wit and plainness about selling of places, and doing everything for money," and this so annoyed the King that he ordered the play to be withdrawn, and, indeed, Lacy was actually "committed to the porters' lodge" for his share in the performance, with the result that he had a violent quarrel with the author and several blows were exchanged. Pepys records the incident and relates how a few days later he saw Lacy act the clown's part in *Love in a Maze* "most admirably."

Lacy's name fitly introduces another famous player who once lived in Drury Lane, in the person of the beautiful Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly Peachum of *The Beggar's Opera*, and afterwards Duchess of Bolton—the second lady who from small beginnings in this part of the town arrived at the highest rung of the titled ladder. She was playing the part when the play was first produced at the Lincoln's Inn Field's Theatre, in Portugal Row, on January 29th, 1728, on which occasion it was that she won the Duke's heart.

But this has carried us into a later period, and there are still one or two incidents connected with Drury Lane during the seventeenth century which should be noticed. One of these also links up the Stage with the Peerage (they have always, then and now, had a curious mutual attraction), for it was in Drury Lane that the notorious Lord Mohun was concerned with his friend, Captain Richard Hill, and their myrmidons, in the attempt to carry off Mrs. Bracegirdle, in 1692. The story is shortly as follows: Hill had conceived a passion for the lady,



had proposed to her, and had been refused, whereupon he determined to abduct her. For this purpose he enlisted the help of his friend Lord Mohun, and having followed the actress about, at last attempted, with the aid of half a dozen soldiers, to force her into a coach which he had in readiness near the Horseshoe Tavern, as she was returning from supping with a Mrs. Page in Princes Street, opposite Russell Street and on the east side of Drury Lane. As she came down the main thoroughfare, about ten o'clock at night, accompanied by her mother, her brother, and Mr. Page, one of Hill's soldiers seized her and tried to force her into the coach. Page, resisting this, was attacked by Hill, sword in hand, and wounded. Mrs. Bracegirdle's screams collected a crowd, whereupon Hill told his hirelings to depart, he and Mohun insisting on seeing the lady home to her house in Howard Street, Strand. But Mr. Page, although wounded, determined to remain to protect Mrs. Bracegirdle; and Hill and Mohun realising that their *coup* had failed, left them, the former, however, vowing vengeance. That vengeance was that same night wreaked on Mountfort, the dramatist and actor, who seems to have been regarded by Hill as a favoured suitor of the lady. The story of that murder, for it was little less, and Mohun's connection with it, as well as that fire-eater's subsequent duel with the Duke of Hamilton, are well-known incidents in the social history of the eighteenth century, which, however, do not here concern us.

Only three years after this event another excitement awaited the inhabitants of Drury Lane, for at a tavern here Sir John Fenwick, Captain Scrope, and some ten or twelve others who were compassing the assassination of William III, met on an evening in June 1695, and (I use Macaulay's words), "when hot with wine, sallied forth sword in hand, headed by Porter and Goodman, beat kettledrums, unfurled banners, and began to light bonfires." The mob thus attracted by their presence made an attack on the tavern, which was sacked, the conspirators being all arrested. At the subsequent trial Fenwick created a sensation by accusing the Duke of

Marlborough, Godolphin, Russell, Shrewsbury, and other members of the Whig party of treasonable negotiations with the Jacobites. He was executed on Tower Hill, on January 28th, 1697.

That Drury Lane had been deteriorating in character for some time is evident from various circumstances, those just related being among them, and that it was anything but a cleanly neighbourhood at an even earlier time may, I think, be inferred from the fact that here it was that the Plague made one of its early appearances in London. Pepys, who went about noting everything, records how on June 7th, 1665, "This day, much against my will, I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and 'Lord have mercy upon us !' writ there ; which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that to my remembrance I ever saw." It was only two months earlier that the first cases of the Plague had been notified in London ; so that Drury Lane was attacked early in the course of that scourge. Indeed, according to Defoe, long before the Plague became a generally serious menace to London, two Frenchmen had died of it in Drury Lane, at the end of November in the previous year (1664). Apparently, too, it was on the increase here from that time until it spread far and wide, and the great number in deaths during the ensuing six months, although their causes were kept as secret as possible by the parish authorities, was largely due to this cause. At last it came to such a pitch that, as Defoe tells us, "few dared go through Drury Lane and the other streets suspected, unless they had extraordinary business that obliged them to do it."

I have mentioned Fenwick's demonstration against William III in Drury Lane, and it was during the latter years of that monarch's reign that the street began to lose the aristocratic character which had attached to it. Indeed, so rapidly did it decline in favour as a residential thoroughfare, that Steele is able to write thus facetiously about it in the forty-sixth number of the *Tatler*, for July 26th, 1709 :

"There is near Covent Garden," he says, "a street

known by the name of Drury, which, before the days of Christianity, was purchased by the Queen of Paphos, and is the only part of Great Britain where the tenure of her vassalage is still in being. All that long course of buildings is under particular districts or ladyships, after the manner of lordships in other parts, over which matrons of known abilities preside, and have, for the support of their age and infirmities, certain taxes paid out of the rewards of the amorous labours of the young. This seraglio of Great Britain is disposed into convenient alleys and apartments, and every house, from the cellar to the garret, inhabited by nymphs of different orders, that persons of every rank may be accommodated." The fact is that, in addition to the main thoroughfare itself having undergone a rapid change for the worse, morally and socially, there was here, as elsewhere in the Covent Garden district, a veritable maze of by-ways and obscure alleys which lent themselves to the traffic adumbrated by Steele. Some of these on the west side of the street I have already noticed, but on the east there were even more, and such places as Clare Court, White Horse Yard<sup>1</sup> (opposite Russell Court), Bennet's Court, King's Head Court, Drum Alley, Stewart's Rents, Golson's Court, Wild Passage,<sup>2</sup> and Princes' Court,<sup>3</sup> were veritable hot-beds of vice, then and for long after."

These places are really outside my area, nor is there much to be said about them, beyond a record of their general unsavoury reputation, but I shall have occasion to speak in another chapter of one of them—Cockpit Court, between Golson's Court and Wild's Passage—because in it stood the little play-house of which Drury Lane may be said to be the lineal descendant. In the meanwhile let me record two incidents which give one an idea of the lawlessness which at that time characterised this quarter of London—a quarter, be it

<sup>1</sup> Burn and Akerman both give a token issued by one Will Neagus here. See list at end of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Gay's "*Drury's mazy courts and dark abodes.*"

<sup>3</sup> At No. 12 in this Court once lived Theophilus Cibber and his wife, the daughter of Dr. Arne.



remembered, that if no longer "well-inhabited," was yet in touch with the West End and nearer it than was Lincoln's Inn Fields which was still aristocratic. The first incident is thus recorded by the antiquary Aubrey :

"Captain Carlo Fantom, a Crotian, spake thirteen languages, was a Captain under the Earle of Essex. He had a world of cuts about his body with swords, was very quarrelsome, and a great ravisher. He met, coming late at night out of the Horse-shoe Tavern in Drury Lane, with a lieutenant of Colonel Rossiter, who had great jingling spurs on. Said he, 'The noise of your spurres doe offend me ; you must come over the kennel and give me satisfaction.' They drew and pressed at each other, and the Lieutenant was runne through, and died in an hour or two, and 'twas not known who kill'd him."

So much for the safety of the streets in the good old days !

The other episode was of a more general lawlessness. Rather to the south of Drury Lane Theatre there was a chapel at which a then famous preacher, Daniel Burgess, officiated. It was situated in New Court, a by-way I fail to find on Rocque's plan, unless it be synonymous with Duke's Court, which occupies a position south of the theatre. When the Sacheverell riots were at their height, the mob, on March 1st, 1710, attacked this place of worship and gutted it, carrying away all the movable fittings, and burning them in a bonfire in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

It would be easy to substantiate from contemporary prose and poetry the immoral state of Drury Lane during at least the earlier half of the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup> ; but it is not pleasant to dwell on an unsavoury subject, and I personally like better to come to a later time, and people the street with the creations of a later and healthier fiction ; and no healthier fiction is to be found in our literature than that of Dickens and no more real personages than those of his characters. Thus it is that when I wander in the Drury Lane of to-day, so changed,

<sup>1</sup> Even in our own day much of this neighbourhood, Barley Court, for instance, a notorious place, was full of vile dens. Much was done towards the betterment of this locality by the Artisans' Dwellings Act, and by later improvements.

so utterly different from what it once was, I seem to see not the fire-eaters and harlots whom we meet with in contemporary stories or poems, in the pictures of Hogarth, and the verse of Gay, but a youthful David Copperfield going into the *à la mode* beef-shop near by and ordering a "small plate" of that comestible ; or those cats "in the back settlements of Drury Lane" about which the Uncommercial Traveller tells us ; or Miss Petowker coming out of "The Théâtre Royal, Drury Lane," or Dick Swiveller passing jauntily to his "apartment" over a tobacconist's in the thoroughfare of which Dickens once wrote that "There is nothing shabbier in Rome itself than Drury Lane."

#### CLARE COURT

I often wonder if little David's *à la mode* beef-shop was the identical one which used to be in Clare Court or Clare House Court, as it was sometimes called. This was known as Johnson's Hotel, and was quite a famous place for this particular dish.

Clare Court itself took its name from that Earl of Clare who is perpetuated also in Clare Market, and whose residence originally stood at the end of the alley, hence its alternative title. Wheatley tells an amusing story concerning a dog belonging to Johnson, which I will give in his own words : "Towards the end of the last century the fortunes of Drury Lane Theatre being very low, a melodrama called *The Driver and his Dog* was put into rehearsal, and a wonderfully trained dog of Jack Bannister's was expected to astonish the town by its acting. The animal acquitted himself to perfection in the rehearsals up to the night of the performance, but, on being suddenly introduced to the footlights and the crowded and expectant audience, was seized with stage fright and bolted. The management was in dismay, when one of the actors remembered that Mr. Johnson, the proprietor of the *à-la-mode* house, was possessed of a very sagacious dog named *Carlo*. Johnson and Carlo were hurried off to the theatre, 'cast' at the shortest notice for their parts, and the piece went off

with the utmost *éclat*, ran for ninety-nine nights, and replenished the treasury."

Tavern licences were not then easy to be obtained, but Sheridan's gratitude induced him to procure one for Mr. Johnson, and he and his descendants occupied the tavern until quite recently, preserving as a cherished treasure a portrait of the dog that had laid the foundation of their prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

To round off the recollections of Drury Lane, I will note the tokens which Akerman and Burn record as having been issued by tradesmen in this thoroughfare. The list given by the former is quite an extensive one and is valuable, as indicating those who carried on business here between the years 1648 and 1672. It is as follows:

"John Barnes, in Drewry Lane, Cheesemonger.

Sign : A Sunflower.

Richard Bridgman, in Drury Lane, dated 1659.

Sign : St. George and the Dragon.

John Clare, in Dreurey Lane in St. Giles.

Sign : a cheese-knife.

Robert Deluke, at the Angell in Drury Lane.

Sign : an angel holding a scroll.

David Demonci, at ye Dragon in Drury Lane.

Sign : a Dragon.

John Duban, in Drury Lane.

Sign : The Arms of France.

John Eldridge, at the Eagle and Crown, in Drury Lane, dated 1667.

Sign : An eagle and a crown.

John Grice, Ironmonger at the Cross, in Drury Lane.

Sign : A cross.

Anthony Hall, in Little Drewry Lane.

Sign : Two daggers crossed.

Edward Harrise, in Little Drewry Lane, dated 1666.

Sign : A mealman.

Thomas Hayton, in Drury Lane.

Sign : A Negro's Head.

Ann How, in Drewry Lane, dated 1657.

Sign : Adam and Eve.

<sup>1</sup> *London Past and Present.*



Joseph Inman, at the Tankerd House in Drewry Lane, dated 1668.

Sign : A tankard.

Walter Lee, Fortune in Drury Lane.

Sign : A figure standing in a boat.

Will. Neagus, in White Horse (Court) in Drury Lane.

Sign : A pair of scales and a wheatsheaf.

Eliz. Norley, in Drury Lane, against ye Plea House, dated 1667.

Sign : A trumpet.

William Patteshall, in Little Drury Lane.

Sign : St. George and the Dragon.

Richard Redwell, in Drury Lane, dated 1656.

Sign : A bell.

Richard Rich, in Litel Drury Lane, Changer of Farthings.

Sign : A bird perched on a sheep.

Akerman surmises that, as the changing of farthings must have been but a poor calling, Rich probably combined it with another, and the device seems to indicate that that was either a baker's or a corn chandler's business.

John Ston, at the George in Drury Lane.

Sign : St. George and the Dragon.

George Thorowgood, in Drury Lane, dated 1666.

Sign : Three Horses saddled and bridled.

Gabriell Truman, in Drury Lane.

Sign : A goat.

Will Wright, in Drury Lane, corner of Blackmor Street.

Sign : A Phoenix.

'At the Sparosnest, in Drure Lane.'

Sign : Three Sparrows.

To these Burn adds two examples :

Thomas Wilson, in Drurie Lane, over against the Sunflower.

(This Sunflower was Barnes's sign, see above.)

Richard Johnson, in Drewry Lane.

Sign : A bell.

This tavern extended through from Wych Street to the Strand, at a point where the Maypole stood. St. Mary-le-Strand occupies the spot.

There was another tavern in Drury Lane, known as The White Lion, a resort of Jack Sheppard, where women of fashion are said to have visited him.

## CHAPTER IX

### LONG ACRE TO GARRICK STREET

**H**AVING perambulated round Covent Garden on three sides, there remain only the streets on the north to be considered. Of these by far the most important is Long Acre, and I will, therefore, deal with that thoroughfare before saying what little there may be to record concerning what used to be called Little and Great Hart Street, but is now Floral Street, and James Street which links up the two former highways.

Long Acre, that is the street now so called, takes its name from a piece of ground which is marked Long Acre, in a recently discovered plan of this district, dated 1585, but which at an earlier time had been called Elm Close. This plot of ground lay to the north of the present thoroughfare, dividing it from what is now Castle Street. It consisted of seven acres, and was part of the grant of land in this neighbourhood, made to the Earl of Bedford in the year 1552. At an earlier period it appears to have belonged to the Mercers Company, and so early as 1391 it is found being held on behalf of that corporation, by one John Bosham whose name appears in a documentary reference to it at a still later date, when it was leased to Sir John Fortescue. Mr. Kingsford states that Long Acre was not part of the ground acquired by Henry VIII from the Mercers, although, in 1650, when the Parliamentary Commissioners were engaged on the settlement of claims to various properties, a certain Captain William Disher was prepared to prove that it actually was, and that it had from that time always been, the property of the State. He was opposed in this assertion by Henry Carey, Earl of Monmouth, who together with the

Mercers Company who had leased it to him, appealed against this, an appeal which, after due consideration, the Commissioners allowed, holding that Elm Field or Long Acre had always been in the possession of the Company or of those to whom it had granted leases.

As was usual with many of the older London streets, Long Acre, that is the thoroughfare so-called, gradually emerged out of one of those countrified lanes which divided, in early days, the closes or fields now covered by houses.

The Lane indeed was in those times a more or less unfrequented one, and it is not surprising to find one of the earliest references to it connected with crime, Machyn, in his very interesting and valuable diary, recording, on December 6th, 1556, "the murder of one Richard Eggylston," in what he calls "Long Acurs." The lane was bordered by elm trees, hence the earlier name of the area as Elm Close, and it was apparently when this part of London was developed by the Russells, that it was renamed Long Acre, from the fact that its superficial area extended to about the size of a drawn-out acre of ground.

Just a century after the murder of Eggylston, Long Acre had become so sophisticated that Howell, in his *Londinopolis*, is able to describe it as "a spacious fair street." Indeed by that time (the middle of the seventeenth century) it was more or less wholly built over, for many years had by then elapsed since development had begun in this quarter, a quarter that was rapidly assuming something of a fashionable air during the earlier part of Charles I's reign.

In the *Calendar of State Papers* are various references to the street, and in the Rate Books, for 1627, quite a number of houses are indicated as being inhabited.

Even earlier in fact, notably in the year 1616, Sir William Slingsby attempted to change the direction of a subsidiary way out of Long Acre, an incident thus referred to among the State Papers: "Sir William Slingsby understanding that the King is displeased about the direction of a way which has been made by him in Long Acre, proffers entire submission and will cause



the way to be altered as his Majesty may direct." As a result of this we learn further that the King gave orders that this "way" should "be made fit for his passage as speedily as possible." Some years later, that is in 1624, certain buildings erected without licence in Long Acre, were ordered to be demolished, an order which had been put in force earlier (1618) in the case of other unauthorised architectural activity. That the street had not as yet arrived at a wholly residential *status*, seems proved by such references as these to buildings of a probably indifferent character, as well as to others which had no doubt been of but a temporary nature. Under the Stuarts proclamations against over-building were as rife as they had been under the Tudors, and we find a certain Scipio Squire ignoring one of them, by erecting a large brick structure, on the south side of the street, in 1631.

Notwithstanding the general prohibition, official permission was obtained by the ground landlord to develop his property, and under date of January 10th, 1631, there is an authority from the King to the Attorney-General (Heath) "to prepare a licence to Francis, Earl of Bedford, to build upon the premises called Covent Garden and Long Acre, with a pardon to the Earl and such persons as he shall name, for offences committed against the proclamation for the restraint of building upon new foundations."

Gradually, however, Long Acre assumed a more dignified appearance and began to number among its residents people of importance. One of these was no less a person than Oliver Cromwell who, in the year 1637, was occupying a house on the south side, a residence he retained till 1643, in which year, by the way, Francis de Lissola, councillor to the Emperor, was living here, in a house belonging to Lord Dunganen. Notwithstanding the presence of such notable ones, however, the majority of the houses in Long Acre were still of a more or less mixed character at this time, and quite small buildings as well as shops were present cheek by jowl with the more impressive abodes that were gradually being erected. But by 1650

practically the whole of the street had been developed on really architectural lines, although the name of Long Acre seems as yet only to have been applied generally to its south side. On the east, between Mercer's Street and Cross Lane, there was, for instance, still a large timber-yard existing as well as a range of stabling with no fewer than fifteen coach-houses ; and towards the west stood a tavern bearing the sign of the Cock, which, it is assumed, was identical with that Cock and Pye Inn, after which a portion of the neighbouring ground, formerly known as Marsh Close, came to be called Cock and Pye Fields.

The general appearance of Long Acre in 1658 can best be estimated by a study of Hollar's remarkable bird's-eye view, published about that year, of which a reproduction is here given, and in which the stabling just referred to, with the ample yard attached, is clearly recognisable, although the building which one Robert Streeter petitioned for authority to erect in 1662, as likely to be an ornament to the neighbourhood, does not of course appear. This structure was to have been built on an empty space in Long Acre, and that space is in all probability the one to the west of the large house, on the south side of the thoroughfare, roughly occupying the site through which Langley Street now runs.

Interesting as such features are to the topographer the general reader will, I think, find more attraction in linking up these dead stones with the memory of the notable people who have trodden them, and whose one-time presence here has invested what is to-day not a specially exhilarating thoroughfare with an atmosphere of romance. For after all it is the human element that can alone do this, unless (which is not the case here) some special architectural excellence can be attached to a street.

I have incidentally stated that Oliver Cromwell once resided in Long Acre, and it is interesting to know that at that time (1637) he is described in the Rate Books as Captain Cromwell, and that he paid the then high poor-rate of 10s. 10d.—a rate which in the last year of his tenancy (1643) had been raised to 14s. This rise, by

the way, perhaps accounts for the fact that in the following year half the houses in the Covent Garden area are said to have been vacant.

An artistic contemporary of Cromwell who also lived in Long Acre, two doors away from the future Lord Protector's house, was Nicholas Stone, who, the son of a quarryman in Devonshire, became one of the outstanding English sculptors of the seventeenth century ; and, indeed, one of whom Dallaway says, that " we owe to him the full praise of having deviated with more success than his immediate predecessors from the stiff and Gothic style." Much of the memorial sculpture of the period to be seen in our older churches emanated from Stone's practised hand. It would appear that he took up his residence in Long Acre, in 1636, if we are to judge by an extant deed conveying a piece of ground here from Francis, Earl of Bedford, to " Nicholas Stone, Esq., of the Parish of St. Martin's in the Fields ; Master Mason to the King." This plot of ground is described as being part of Covent Garden and Long Acre, and extended back to land in the tenancy of the Countess of Anglesea and to a site occupied by the Earl of Pembroke's stables, probably identical with the range of stabling already referred to. Although the fact of Stone's acquiring this lease does not prove that the year in which it was granted was the first in which he came to live here, as he is described as of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, he probably resided here or elsewhere in the parish before then. There is, however, no doubt as to when he quitted the street, for he remained here till his death which occurred on August 24th, 1647, when he was in his sixty-second year. Four days later he was buried in old St. Martin's, on the north wall of which church was the following inscription surmounted by his head in profile erected by his son Henry : " To the lasting memory of Nicholas Stone, Esq., Master Mason to his Majesty, in his life-time esteemed for his knowledge in sculpture and architecture, which his works in many parts do testify, and, though made for others, prove monuments to his fame."

The Long Acre house afterwards became the residence



of Nicholas Stone's sons, Henry, Nicholas, and John, who all followed in their father's footsteps as sculptors—adequate, but never reaching to his level. From the survey made by the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1650, it appears that they were then paying a ground-rent of £10 a year in respect of this property. Henry Stone died here on August 24th, 1653; Nicholas and John elsewhere, but they were all buried in St. Martin's, and when in 1699 Charles Stoakes, a kinsman of theirs, repaired their monuments there, he caused the following lines to be set up beneath them :

“ Four rare Stones are gone  
The Father and three sons,”

which obviously indicates a greater genius for kinship than for rhyme.

The house in which the Stones resided must have been one of considerable size, if we are to judge by the story told by Walpole in his *Anecdotes of Painting*. According to this, John Stone and a friend who shared his Royalist sympathies escaped after the King's final defeat; but the latter was captured and hanged before his father's door in Smithfield, whereas Stone hid himself for a whole year in the Long Acre house, without, according to Vertue, the knowledge of his father; on which Walpole's supposition is that either he had offended the old man by taking up arms or that his father was fearful of forfeiting his professional emoluments by engaging in party dissensions.

But a greater man than Nicholas Stone once lived in Long Acre in the person of John Dryden, whose house faced Rose Street at the western end of the main thoroughfare. In the Rate Books he is described as John Dreydon, *Esq.*, which shows that even if the collector could not spell his name correctly (and few of these gentry were good at doing this), he at least recognised that he had here to do with a person of distinction. It was while living here that Dryden was so brutally attacked in Rose Street itself on the night of December 18th, 1679, an incident already described earlier in this volume.

The Dryden Press was subsequently set up on the site of the poet's abode here, No. 137 Long Acre.

Indeed Long Acre was once as much a street of poetry as it was of carriage-building. The poets have long since disappeared, but the carriages, or, as now, the motor-cars, continue to dominate the thoroughfare, which they have made their own since the days of the Stuarts.

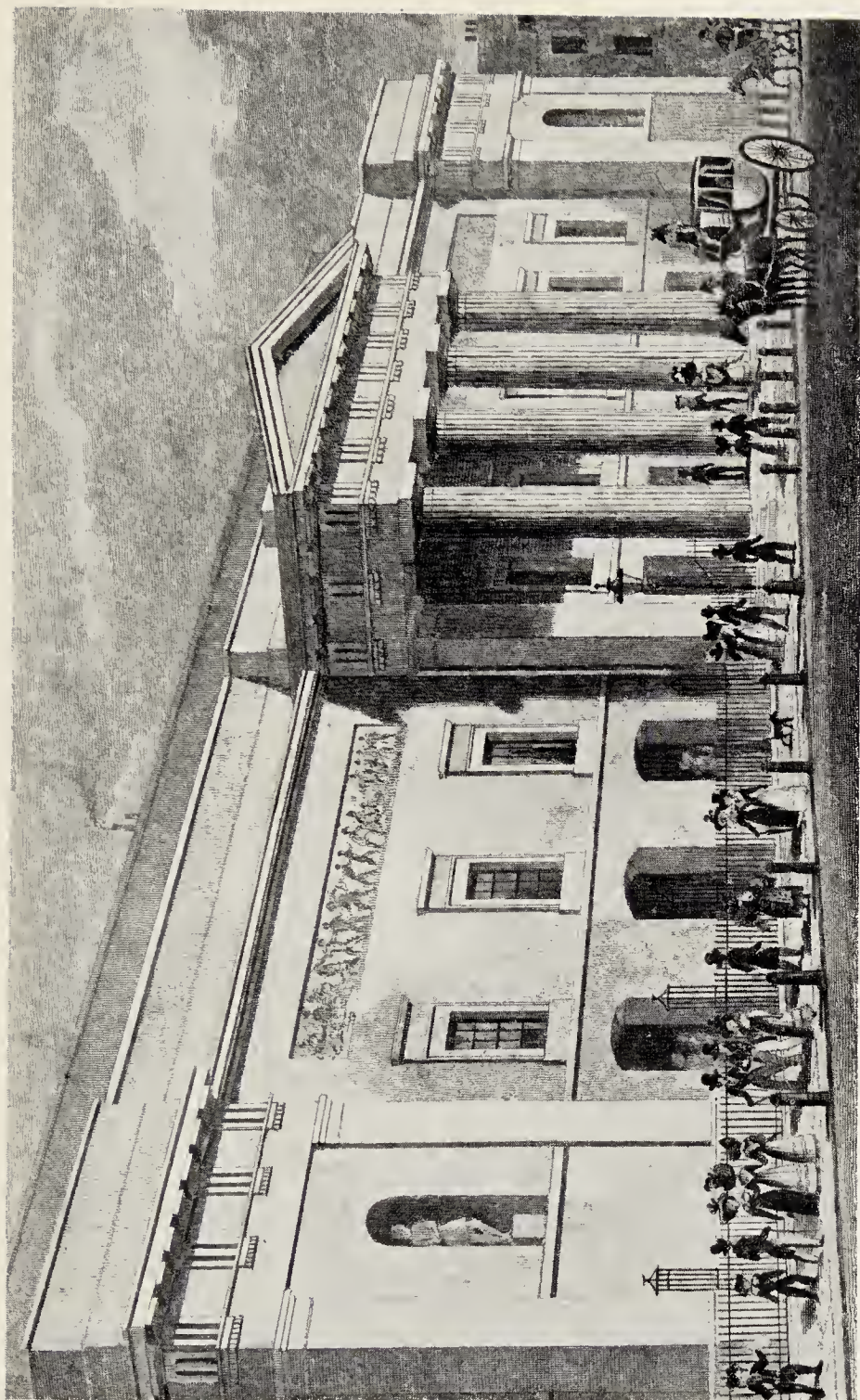
One of the bards who lived here was Richard Lovelace, who dwelt, we are told, in a cellar ; yet another was John Taylor, the Water Poet, as he was called. Taylor, wise in his generation, did not rely solely on his verse to keep him alive, and varied the delight of poetry by the more substantial calling of a tavern-keeper. For he was mine host of the "Poet's Head" in Phoenix Alley, afterwards called Hanover Court, a tiny by-way on the south side of the street leading from about the middle of its east end to Great Hart Street, and almost opposite Hanover Street which communicated with Castle Street. He describes his *Journey into Wales*, published in 1652, as being "performed by John Taylor, dwelling at the sign of the Poet's Head, in Phoenix Alley, near the middle of Long Acre" ; and having prefixed a portrait of himself to that work, he added under it the lines :

" There's many a head stands for a sign ;  
Then, gentle reader, why not mine."

As a matter of fact his first sign had been a " Mourning Crown," but in those Commonwealth days, this was obviously too suggestive of Royalist sympathies to be safe, and he was obliged to substitute another of a less provocative character.

Taylor's career as a tavern-keeper was, however, but a short one, as he set up his house in 1652 and he died two years later, being buried on December 5th, 1654, in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. His widow, Mrs. Taylor, continued the place for another four or five years, but in 1658 her name in the Rate Books is crossed out in favour of one " Mons. Lero," who was apparently her successor in the business.





*After a drawing by T. H. Shepherd, dated 1828*

DRURY LANE THEATRE  
Shewing Sir J. Soane's Portico.





Another literary man who once kept a tavern here was Ned Ward ; while a poet more famous in his day than now is connected with the street in a less intimate way, for it was the custom of Nicholas Rowe to frequent a house known as the "Vine," in Long Acre, coming hither from his lodgings in King Street hard by "every Friday," according to some verses in which he makes reference to the place. This tavern was kept at one time by John Barnes, who was also a wine-cooper, and who issued a token bearing the sign of his house in 1664.

The association of yet one more bard with Long Acre does not seem to have been of so innocent a character, if we are to be guided by Johnson and Pope. For the former tells us that Matthew Prior was accustomed to leave the company of the wits and fine gentlemen among which he shone, and to come and smoke and drink with a common soldier and his wife here. This in itself might only have inferred a certain liking for varying the quality of his associates ; but Pope puts a rather different complexion on the matter, for he states that Prior "used to bury himself for whole days and nights together with the poor, mean creature" who is said to have been idealised as the Chloe of his poems.

Another woman of a similarly low character, with whom Prior was familiar, also lived in Long Acre. She was named Bessy Cox, and the poet has perpetuated her in his verse as Emma. It is said that so infatuated was he with the lady that he would have married her if he could. In all probability she resided in one of those "blackguard houses in Long Acre," which Dr. Cornwallis describes as being visited by the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire in 1784, when she was canvassing the district on behalf of Charles James Fox.

At the west end of Long Acre, and on its south side, was an alley, known as Banbury Court, which preserves in its name the memory of Banbury House, the residence of the Earl of Peterborough in 1673. Rocque shows it on his 1746 plan as does Horwood fifty years later ; but neither of these cartographers indicates another by-way known as Lumley Court, which is said to have been so called after a Lady Lumley who was living there at the

time of the Restoration. Lord Peterborough was the second Earl who figured in James II's coronation, and filled a number of high offices, and who died in 1697, aged seventy-six. He was uncle to the famous third Earl, the military leader whose "brisk look," noted by Macky, and title, won the hand of Anastasia Robinson in the last year (1735) of his life. Of Lady Lumley nothing appears to be known save her presence here and the fact that she gave her name to an infinitesimal portion of London.

Although Long Acre cannot claim the artistic atmosphere attaching to some of the other streets in this district, yet it can boast one or two artists, in addition to the Stones, as past residents. One of these was Simon Gribelin, the engraver, who was living in a house at the corner of Banbury Court in 1712, and who, after being in England some twenty-five years, only at the end of that time succeeded in making a name with his "Darius in his Tent," produced in 1707. He died in 1733.

John Greenhill, the best of Lely's pupils, was another painter who is associated, although not by residence, with Long Acre. He was only twenty-seven when he died, and his master settled £40 a year on his widow. His portrait by himself is at Dulwich. His death was caused by his own fault, for becoming, we are told,<sup>1</sup> acquainted with the players, he fell into a debauched course of life, and coming home late one night from the Vine Tavern (kept, as I have before mentioned, by John Barnes and frequented by Rowe) he tumbled into the kennel in Long Acre, and being carried to Parry Walton's, the painter's, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he lodged, he died there that night.

To come to later times, the early pictures of the father of English landscape painting, Richard Wilson, might have been seen exposed for sale, at ridiculously low prices, in the shop-window of a shoemaker in Long Acre, where the then struggling artist was accustomed to exhibit them; while, at a rather later date, that is in the year 1755, Thomas Stothard was born here. His father at that time kept a tavern known as the "Black Horse,"

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*.



a great rendezvous for the coachmakers, who then, as now, filled the streets with their shops and showrooms, and in a room in this hostelry the future artist first saw the light on August 17th.

I may here note in connection with carriage-building in Long Acre, that when Pepys determined to keep his coach, he went, on November 2nd, 1668, to see one, on his friend Povy's advice, at a coach-builder's here. He wanted "a coach just like Povy's, but it was sold this very morning." Mr. Cunningham in his *London* says that the Diarist's father-in-law lived in Long Acre, and that Pepys "was dreadfully flustered at having to visit him in a street so filled with taverns." Personally I have not found any allusion to this, and in any case one can hardly imagine Pepys to have objected to taverns seeing that he was so inveterate a frequenter of such places.

Conduit Court, at No. 17, through whose tortuous ways one can reach Rose Street from Long Acre, still remains (or did a few years since—one is never safe in saying anything remains in London unless you have seen it on the day you set down the fact, and then it will probably have gone before the fact appears in print) and in it is the old tavern known as the "Bird in Hand." The sign appears on its Long Acre front. It is recorded in a news-sheet for October 25th, 1731, wherein the following advertisement appears: "Whereas Three Pieces of Cambrick were dropt on Monday night between Long Acre and Lancaster Court in the Strand ty'd up in a Blue Paper—whoever brings them to the Bird-in-Hand in Long Acre shall have a guinea Reward and no questions ask'd." Conduit Court, which Strype describes as "indifferent broad with a free-stone pavement, and passage to Hart Street; a court indifferently well built and inhabited," has, too, other associations, for it was between it and Leg Alley to the east that the Duke's Bagnio, later known as the King's Bagnio, and later still as the Queen's, was established in 1682. At first this bath was run on respectable lines, but in course of time it degenerated into little better than a house of ill-fame, an incarnation through which most of the similar places in this area passed.

First built, as I have said, in 1682, it was reconstructed and enlarged in 1694. In a description of it written by Samuel Haworth, M.D., in 1683, it is described as "a stately edifice, of an oval figure, in length 45 feet, and in breadth 35 feet. 'Tis covered at the top with a high and large cupola, in which there are several round glasses fixt to let in light, which are much larger, and no fewer in number than those of the Royal Bagnio."<sup>1</sup> There was also a (now unique) broadside issued of this bath, in 1686, with a representation of it and its dimensions ; while there is in existence a rare silver admission ticket to it, bearing on the obverse an interior view of the bath, with the words "The Duke's Bagnio in Long Acre. Tuesday, Friday, women" ; and on the reverse, in the centre a monogram J.D.Y. (James, Duke of York) and the motto "Honi soit Qui Mal y Pense." There is a long and very detailed description of the Duke's Bagnio in Malcolm's *Londinium Redivivum*, which incorporates Haworth's pamphlet. In a large house which hid it from the street dwelt Sir William Jennings, a favourite of the Duke of York, who carried on the place, having received a Royal patent for the making of all public Bagnios and Baths. In 1694, the Bagnio was reconstructed and greatly improved. Adjoining it was a place of refreshment known as the Duke's Bagnio Coffee House.

Close by Conduit Court, too, the first of the Mug-Houses was opened. Macky, who visited this one, describes it in his *Journey through England*, and tells us "that every Wednesday and Saturday, a mixture of Gentlemen, Lawyers and Tradesmen, meet in a great Room, and are seldom under a hundred." They had a President who sat in a raised chair and ruled the company, what time music interspersed with songs from one of the members enlivened the proceedings. Ale was alone drunk and everyone had his own special mug. The meetings lasted generally from seven till ten. In fact these mug-houses were something between a club and

<sup>1</sup> This probably refers to the first of these establishments, opened in London in 1679, at Butcher's Hall Lane (now King Edward Street), Newgate Street.

such later gatherings as the Coal Hole and the Cider Cellars. But in course of time they became of some political importance, inasmuch as they gave rise to those mug-house riots which did not always subside without bloodshed, and which finally resulted in the demolition of the chief meeting-places, a particularly famous one being in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, kept by one Read, which was so attacked, when the proprietor shot Vaughan the leader of the onslaught.<sup>1</sup>

On Rocque's plan, and still more clearly shown by Horwood, will be observed a tiny by-way called Chapel Alley, leading to a chapel, on the north side of the west end of Long Acre. This chapel once belonged to a certain John Brooks, but he eventually sold it to the Rev. George Whitefield, whose ministrations here met with no little opposition from the then Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, who had no sympathy with his evangelical doctrines. In consequence of this, Whitefield sought for another meeting-house in which to carry on his activities, but not finding one, eventually obtained a site in the Tottenham Court Road, on which he erected his famous Tabernacle in 1756,<sup>2</sup> the last year in which he preached in the Long Acre chapel.

Another landmark here was the St. Martin's Hall designed by R. Westmacott, and erected in 1847-50 by Cubitt for John Hullah, the musician who here held his singing classes and concerts. But the chief interest in the building centres in the fact that it was here that Dickens gave three readings from his *Christmas Carol* in aid of the fund to relieve the family of Douglas Jerrold, in July 1859. On the 13th of that month we find the novelist writing to Macready that "the St. Martin's Hall audience was a very extraordinary thing. The two thousand odd people were like one, and their enthusiasm was something awful."

The significance of these early tentative readings lay in the fact that their success finally determined Dickens to embark on that systematic course of such exhibitions

<sup>1</sup> For many interesting details of these Mug-House Riots, see Doran's *London in the Jacobite Times*.

<sup>2</sup> See the author's *London's Old Latin Quarter*. (Jonathan Cape.)



which, there is little doubt, helped so largely to bring about his premature death. In 1858, he read at the St. Martin's Hall for his own benefit, on which occasion, in a short prefatory address, he said that he considered it a good thing for a public man like himself to be brought face to face with his readers on terms of mutual confidence and respect. The last of his readings here, for this year, took place on July 22nd.

In 1861 a second series began, but by then the St. Martin's Hall had been destroyed by fire, and these took place at the St. James's Hall. St. Martin's Hall was subsequently rebuilt as a playhouse, called the Queen's Theatre. Later, about the year 1879, it had become the headquarters of what was known as the University Co-operative Stores ; and later still was used as a gymnasium by the Young Men's Christian Association.

A curious incident connected with a once celebrated, but now nearly forgotten, literary man occurred in Long Acre. For here on an evening in the December of 1727, John Hoole, inseparably associated with Tasso and Ariosto through his translations of the works of those poets, was born in, of all places, a hackney coach ! Although in these days when children come into the world in aeroplanes, and apparently are anticipated as likely to do so in submarines, such an advent may not seem unduly strange. The fact is that Hoole's mother was on her way to Drury Lane Theatre to witness a performance of a tragedy written by his father, when this surprising circumstance occurred, apparently, however, without ill effects to the mother and certainly not to the child's brain.

The Long Acre of to-day is, as I have said, still dominated by coach and motor-car builders, but Messrs. Merryweather's, the famous fire engine makers, at No. 63, have been rooted to their corner since the business was established over a couple of centuries ago. The thoroughfare was one of those, too, which suffered from the air-raids in the Great War, when the offices of *John Bull*, at Nos. 93-4, were, as most people remember, badly damaged.

As in the case of Drury Lane, I give a list taken from Akerman's *Tradesmen's Tokens* of such things emanating from Long Acre, for the benefit of those interested in this fascinating and topographically important subject :

“ Robert Abbitts, Long Acre.

Sign : A leg.

John Askugh, Long Acre, dated 1659.

Sign : A tallow-chandler dipping candles.

Robert Aungeir, at Long Aker End.

James Aylord, in Long Acre.

Sign : A terrestrial globe on a stand.

John Barnes, wine cooper, at The Vine, in Long Aker, dated 1664.

Sign : A vine.

Martha Churcher. In Long Aker, dated 1663.

Gabriel Crannidge. In Long Aker, dated 1666.

Will. Edmonds, at Ye Globe Tavern in Long Aker, dated 1667.

Ralph Elrington. In Long Aker, dated 1657.

Sign : A still.

David Lumsden, in Long Acre.

Sign : The Royal Arms.

Benjamin Mason. Backside Long Aker, dated 1666.

... RH and Morgan. Brewers in Long Aker.

Sign : A hind.

William Naler, at the Virgin in Long Aker, dated 1654.

George Priest. A semsters shop, in Long Aker.

William Ralph, in Long Aker.

Sign : A sugar-loaf.

Will Ralph, grocer, in Long Aker, dated 1656.

Sign : A sugar loaf.

} These are  
} apparently  
} more or less  
} identical.

John Sares, in Long Aker, dated 1664.

Sign : A harp and a harrow.

Robert Skipwith, Backside of Long Acre, dated 1666.

Sign : A bunch of grapes.

John Watson. In Long Aker.

William Whitehall, in Long Aker, dated 1660.

Sign : A cheesemonger's knife.

To these Burn, in his *London Traders' Tokens*, adds but two :

Richard Redhill, in Long Acre.

Sign : A man dipping candles.

and

James Barkey, in Long Acker, dated 1663.

Sign : Seven Stars.

An interesting point, as will be observed, in the above list is the variety of the spelling of the word Long Acre.

It is amusing to find that, in 1695, a certain John Sandars, a coachmaker in Long Acre was fined £12 for refusing to serve as an overseer to the parish.

### JAMES STREET

Almost in the middle of Long Acre is James Street, which debouches from its south side and crossing what was once Hart, but is now Floral, Street, enters the north side of Covent Garden Market. It is a short thoroughfare, but is not without its history and associations. Like the majority of the older streets in this district it was formed in or about the year 1637, and takes its name from James, Duke of York, the second son of Charles I.

The earliest of the few distinguished residents recorded here was Sir Henry Herbert, the last to hold the court office of Master of the Revels, but whose chief claim to remembrance centres in the fact that he was the brother of two far more notable men, namely, Lord Herbert of Cherbury and George Herbert, the poet and divine. Unfortunately neither of these distinguished men can be claimed even as a visitor to their brother here. The former, who died in 1648, may, of course, have been one, but no record remains of the fact ; while the latter died some four years before the thoroughfare came into existence. Sir Henry's house is said to have been constructed of red brick, and was the last but one from the corner of Hart Street on the west side.

So much for the very meagre aristocratic associations of James Street. Artistically it was a little, but only a little, richer. For two artists are alone known to have resided here. One of these was Charles Grignion, the engraver whose name appears on so many an eighteenth-



century print, and who, by the way, executed the plates for Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting* as well as reproduced some of Stothard's designs for Bell's *Poets*. He was the brother of J. T. Smith's friend, Thomas Grignion, the jeweller in Covent Garden. Once Mrs. Nollekens was anxious to know which was the actual house Charles Grignion, an old friend of her father's, had occupied in James Street, and sought information from Twigg the fruiterer of Covent Garden to whom her father, Mr. Justice Welch, had often shown kindnesses. "No. 27," said Twigg; "I recollect the old house when it was a shop inhabited by two old Frenchwomen, who came over here to chew paper for the *papier-mâché* people." Charles Grignion, who besides the work I have mentioned, was for so many years employed in engraving the book illustrations of Gravelot, Hayman, and Wale, as well as some of Hogarth's designs, fell into poverty in his old age, and died in Kentish Town on November 1st, 1810, in his ninety-fifth year.<sup>1</sup>

But the more important of the artists who have shed lustre on James Street was Sir James Thornhill. He did not actually live in the street, his abode being in the Piazza, but at the back of that house he built a large room the frontage of which was in this street, and it was here that he attempted to bring into existence an artistic academy. To this end he issued free tickets of admission to all such as might desire to take advantage of instruction in drawing and painting, "but," says Hogarth, relating the circumstance in his *Anecdotes*, "so few would lay themselves under such an obligation that this soon sank into insignificance."

Thornhill's attempted academy abutted on the premises occupied as an auction-room by Langford, who had been preceded in their occupancy by Robins. At a later time they were known as Cox's Auction Rooms, and formed part and parcel of the Tavistock Hotel<sup>2</sup> at the corner of Covent Garden itself.

<sup>1</sup> *Nollekens and his Times*, by J. T. Smith, edited by Wilfrid Whitten.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Tavistock Hotel, see the chapter on Covent Garden Piazzas.

Among Garrick's various residences in London, James Street is to be numbered, for here he lodged for a time (1746-7) over a periwig-maker's establishment, and while here was seriously ill for some weeks, when, it is said, that "flocks of footmen" came to the house bearing messages of enquiry from their employers concerning the progress of the famous invalid.

There are two references to James Street in the *Spectator* which are alone enough to give importance to any thoroughfare. One is in the account written by Steele of his following a young lady in her carriage, to which I have already referred, when the lady's coachman "whipped up James Street," and Steele's Jehu drove along King Street, in order to intercept the other conveyance "at the end of Newport Street and Long Acre."

The other reference has for its purpose the indication of such as were wont to frequent this neighbourhood after dark. "The other Evening," writes Steele, "passing along near Covent Garden, I was jogged on the Elbow as I turned into the Piazza on the right Hand coming out of *James Street*, by a slim young Girl of about Seventeen, who with a pert air asked me if I was for a Pint of Wine. I do not know but I should have indulged my Curiosity in having some Chat with her, but that I am informed the Man of the *Bumper* knows me; and it would have made a Story for him not very agreeable to some Part of my Writings, though I have in others so frequently said that I am wholly unconcerned in any Scene I am in, but merely as a Spectator. This Impediment being in my way, we stood under one of the Arches by Twilight; and there I could observe as exact Features as I have ever seen, the most agreeable Shape, the finest Neck and Bosom, in a word the whole Person of a woman exquisitely beautiful. She affected to allure me with a forced Wantonness in her Look and Air, but I saw it checked with Hunger and Cold: Her Eyes were wan and eager, her Dress thin and tawdry, her Meen genteel and childish. This strange Figure gave me much Anguish of Heart, and to avoid being seen with her I went away, but could not forbear giving her

a Crown. The poor Thing sighed, curtsied, and with a Blessing, expressed with the utmost Vehemence, turned from me. This Creature is what they call *newly Come upon the Town*, but who, I suppose, falling into cruel Hands, was left in the first month of her Dishonour, and exposed to pass through the Hands and Discipline of one of those Hags of Hell whom we call Bawds."

I have given this extract in full, because it indicates, more or less, the general character of the streets of this neighbourhood, and it also shows Steele in that attractive light which was one of his most charming qualities.

The man of the "Bumper" refers to a friend of Steele's, Richard Estcourt the actor, who had taken a tavern bearing this sign at the beginning of the year 1712. Steele in the *Tatler* (Nos. 260 and 266) advertises the fact, and in No. 267 he introduces a puff for his friend in the form of a letter purporting to come from Sir Roger de Coverley. Unfortunately Estcourt was not destined to enjoy the fruits of such a backing for long, as in the following August he died ; not in James Street, however, but in his lodgings in Southampton Street, from which house he was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

Timbs, in his *Romance of London*, notices the residence in James Street of a mysterious lady who arrived from Mansfield in the year 1714 in a coach drawn by six horses. She died, apparently, in this thoroughfare six years later and was buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's. Whom she was has never been satisfactorily explained, but report had it that she was a member of an old Roman Catholic family, and had been immured in a convent whence, by the aid of a relative, she escaped. Her *incognito* was no doubt assumed in order to avoid detection.

There is an incidental reference to a tavern called the "Nag's Head" in James Street, in Strype's account of the boundaries of the parish of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Beyond this nothing is known regarding this hostelry.

A better remembered place of entertainment here was what the author of the *English Spy* calls the "Finish," "a coffee-house, in James Street, Covent Garden, where



the *peep-o'-day boys* and *family* men meet to conclude the night's debauch," and of which Robert Cruikshank drew the plate that accompanies the writer's description. This "Finish," by the way, is not to be confounded with the one known by the same title, on the south side of Covent Garden, and originally called the "Queen's Head."

### HART STREET, NOW FLORAL STREET

The renaming of streets has sometimes, but seldom, a real justification, but never, perhaps, has a more foolish change in this direction been made than when Hart Street was re-christened Floral Street. It might just as well have been called Vegetable Street. However, there it is, and anyone looking to-day for Hart Street in this neighbourhood would look in vain. It is Floral Street if you want to direct a taxi-driver. But as I do not want, here, to do anything of the kind, I shall content myself with the name it bore since it was formed *circa* 1637.

Hart Street links up Bow Street and James Street, and, since 1861, has been continued on the west by Garrick Street. In earlier days it was a *cul-de-sac* for all practical purposes at its western extremity, which turned north into the exiguous Conduit Court, through which latter you could emerge into Long Acre. In those days the eastern portion of the thoroughfare between Bow Street and James Street was known as Great Hart Street, the remainder being called Little Hart Street.

The exact origin of the name is uncertain, but in all probability it took it from the White Hart Tavern, a house of considerable antiquity, being mentioned in the lease of ground granted to Sir William Cecil in 1570.<sup>1</sup>

Hart Street does not yield a vast amount of interesting associations, although a few notable people, chiefly actors, have been connected with it, and in the past it must certainly have been more sophisticated than it is at present when a vegetarian air is communicated to it by the shops of the many fruit salesmen to be found there.

<sup>1</sup> There was a "White Hart" in the Strand (see *Archæologia*, vol. 30), and also one at north-east end of Drury Lane, at the corner of High Street, St. Giles's.

Its past histrionic atmosphere is produced by the residence here of Joe Haines, the actor, who died here on April 4th, 1701, and was buried in the neighbouring church of St. Paul's. As little is known of Haines, except that he was a consistently good performer, the Charles Mathews of his day, the following anecdote must take the place of more important information. Haines was a man of infinite wit, always playing practical jokes, a sort of early Theodore Hook. On one occasion he was arrested for debt in the street, at the moment when the Bishop of Ely happened to be driving past. Said Haines to the bailiffs who had arrested him: "Gentlemen, there is my cousin, the Bishop of Ely; let me speak a word to him, and he will settle the matter of the money." He then went up to the carriage and whispered to the Bishop, whom he only knew by sight: "My Lord, here are two poor waverers who have such twinges of conscience that I believe they will destroy themselves." Whereupon the Bishop called the men to him, and said, "Both of you come to me to-morrow, and I will satisfy you." The bailiffs, temporarily appeased, went away, and the next day repaired to Ely Place to interview the prelate. "Well, my men," said the Bishop, "what is the nature of your scruples?"—"Scruples, my Lord!" they replied, "we have no scruples; we are bailiffs and want the £20 your cousin, Joe Haines, owes. You promised to satisfy us, and we hope you will do so!" The Bishop, it is said, in order to avoid any further trouble and publicity, paid the money.

Another actor who once resided in Hart Street was Barton Booth, who was here in 1732, a time when he was suffering from serious illness; a little later he went to No. 3 Charles Street (to-day 37 Wellington Street) and there died in the following year (1733). He is remembered as the creator of Cato, in Addison's play, and his name is perpetuated in Barton Street, Westminster, which he built. He had, as a boy, been educated at Westminster School. His widow, once a dancer and mistress of the first Duke of Marlborough, lived afterwards in Russell Street, and died there in 1773.

The last of Hart Street's trio of actor-residents was

Charles Macklin, who on his retirement from the stage in 1754, opened a tavern here as we have seen that Estcourt had before done in Covent Garden itself. Macklin's venture was not a success, and he had eventually to return to the stage to earn a living in the following year. He made his last appearance at Covent Garden Theatre as Shylock in 1789, he being then in his ninetieth year. He broke down before the end of the play, however, but lived till 1797, when he died at No. 4 Tavistock Row.

In view of these histrionic memories it is not inappropriate to find Covent Garden Theatre occupying, to-day, a large portion of the south side of what was once Great Hart Street

One unusual incident is recorded as having occurred in this thoroughfare, and is thus related in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 5th, 1800 :

“ This morning about seven, as a party of the Guards were conveying to the Savoy two deserters whom they had brought from the country, in passing down James Street, Covent Garden, it was discovered that one of them, William Jackson, had slipped from the handcuffs and was attempting to escape by running down Hart Street. Charles Bexton, one of the Guards, immediately fired, and the fugitive fell dead. The ball penetrated the back part of the neck and came out at the side of the mouth. The body after lying a considerable time in Hart Street, was conveyed to Covent Garden watch-house.”

I may note that the watch-house in question was the one close to St. Paul's church.

#### GARRICK STREET

As I have before observed, all this quarter of the town was greatly altered as to the alignments of some of its thoroughfares and by-ways, by the formation of Garrick Street, which was made in order to provide a more direct means of communication with the Market than had hitherto been possible. It was begun in 1855, and finished about six years later at a cost of £34,000, to



which the Duke of Bedford contributed £1500. It has been said that the new street was named after the Garrick Club. That famous institution, which had been founded by Frank Miles in 1831, remained, however, in its original home at 35 King Street till 1864, when it moved to its far ampler premises in Garrick Street. The Club-house is the outstanding feature of the thoroughfare, and its interior is noted for the remarkable collection of theatrical and other portraits, many by Zoffany, which covers most of the wall-space ; as well as for its collection of relics, many of which belonged to Garrick himself. All the notable actors and many eminent in other walks of life have been members of this famous club, and its history fills a large volume written by the late Percy Fitzgerald who carried on there the tradition of his friend Dickens, whose unfortunate quarrel with Thackeray over the Edmund Yates affair took place in the earlier house in King Street.

## CHAPTER X

### THE THEATRES

THERE have been five theatres in the area covered by this book, three of which still exist—Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Lyceum. The two no longer here were the Cockpit in Cockpit Alley, off Drury Lane, and the Queen's, in Long Acre. The former of these was known alternatively as the Phoenix. It stood in Cockpit Alley, later re-named Pitt Place, a turning which ran from Great Wild Street to Drury Lane. Its exact site is now covered by the Peabody Buildings. It derived its name from the fact that it occupied a structure hitherto used for cock-fighting. The exact date of its foundation is not quite certain, but it was probably about the year 1616 that it came into existence.

Although it was in the nature of one of those private playhouses—the Whitefriars Theatre was another—which began to emerge at this period, the Cockpit appears to have been a rowdy kind of place, and if it did not, as Prynne, a very partial authority, asserts, demoralise the whole of Drury Lane, it at least established for itself an unsatisfactory reputation. In a passage in his *Valpone*, Ben Jonson indicates its noisy character ; but more significant proof of this is afforded by the fact that on the Shrove Tuesday of the year 1617, an attack was made on it by the London apprentices, those self-constituted guardians of public morals, who enjoyed a kind of ethical excuse for doing damage to other people's property, and who on this occasion nearly succeeded in demolishing the whole place, a fact commemorated by a broadsheet entitled : " A Ballade in praise of the London 'Prentices, and what they did at the Cockpit Playhouse in Drury Lane." After this

incident no more performances were of course possible at the Cockpit for some time, and we find it, later (1647), being converted into, of all things, a school-house. However, perhaps only a portion of the structure was so used, or if the whole then the school would have soon ceased to be, for we find Evelyn stating, on February 5th, 1647-8, that "he saw a tragi-comedy acted in the Cockpit, after there had been none of these diversions *for many years* before the war," and this passage also indicates that between 1617 and 1647 performances must have taken place here; so that the place probably had a recrudescence as a play-house after its destruction and before it was converted to other uses. But an adverse fate attended the fortunes of the theatre, for on March 24th, 1649 (N.S.), a band of soldiers, probably actuated by sectaries, broke into and demolished it. The Phoenix, as it had now begun to be called, had not, however, been so re-named for nothing, for, true to its title, it again rose from its ashes, and about ten years later (1656) we find it being opened by Davenant and Betterton, with a performance of the former's play entitled *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, which, we are told, was "represented daily at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, at three in the afternoon punctually." Evelyn went, and attended another performance here three years later, and thus records the fact: "May 5th, 1659—I went to visit my brother in London, and next day to see a new opera, after the Italian way, in recitative music and scenes, much inferior to the Italian composition and magnificence; but it was prodigious that in a time of such public consternation such a vanity should be kept up or permitted. I being engaged with company could not decently resist going to see it, though my heart smote me for it."

In 1660, that propitious year for such things, one Rhodes, once a prompter at the Blackfriars Theatre, supported by his merry men, as Doran terms them, opened the Phoenix with legitimate drama, and here Betterton, that great actor whom, by the way, Rhodes had introduced to the Stage, appeared on its boards.



It was then that an Act of Parliament was passed authorising only two companies to play in London : "The King's Servants" and "The Duke's Servants," as they were called. It was, of course, the object of every actor to get enrolled in one of these bodies, and such men as Hart and Mohun, who had before been among Rhodes' company, seceded to that of Killigrew who headed the King's Servants ; while Betterton joined the Duke's. The latter appear to have taken over the Phoenix or Cockpit from Rhodes. But the days of that playhouse were numbered, and the erection of a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields and another in Drury Lane gave it its death-blow. Its importance, in spite of its earlier unsavoury reputation, lies in the fact that it formed a link between the old Elizabethan centre of dramatic art and those inaugurated at the Restoration.

#### DRURY LANE THEATRE

It was on May 7th, 1663, that the first Drury Lane theatre was opened, with a performance of *The Humorous Lieutenant*, by Beaumont and Fletcher. The playhouse was erected, at a cost of £1500, for Killigrew and his ("The King's Servants") company. Known at first officially as the Theatre Royal, it is so called by Pepys who, going there on the day after it had been inaugurated, thus describes it : "The house is made with extraordinary good convenience, and yet hath some faults, as the narrowness of the passages in and out of the pit, and the distance from the stage to the boxes, which I am confident cannot hear ; but for all other things is well ; only, above all, the musique being below, and most of it sounding under the very stage, there is no hearing of the basses at all, nor very well of the trebles, which sure must be mended." But he was "a little shamed," he adds, "that my wife and woman were in such a pickle, all the ladies being finer and better dressed in the pit than they used, I think, to be."

Theatres are invariably exposed to all kinds of

untoward happenings, and the successive Drury Lanes have been anything but immune. The first misadventure that befell here was a heavy rain-storm which occurred on June 1st, 1664, when the pit was deluged and the audience obliged to fly in disorder, Pepys being among it. A like circumstance happened again four years later, by which it is obvious that improved as had become the methods of theatre-building, the combination of light with security from the elements had not yet been attained.

Five years later a far greater catastrophe occurred (on January 1672), and the Theatre Royal was burnt to the ground, together with some fifty or more houses in its immediate neighbourhood. In spite of diligent enquiry, the cause of the fire was never discovered. Wren was commissioned to design a new house, and this, costing £4000, was opened on March 26th, 1674. Dryden, in his prologue of "The opening of the New House," terms it "plain built; a bare convenience only," and he speaks of the "mean ungilded stage," and "our homely house"; but this was perhaps only a form of rhetorical modesty. At any rate Colley Cibber's description of the place shows that great improvements had been made here, the players being brought nearer the audience, for instance, and other changes for the better effected, although Wren may not have greatly troubled himself about superfluous decoration.

The new house had a successful career, and in 1682, when the King's Servants were joined by the Duke's from the Dorset Gardens Theatre, it became the one and only playhouse in London. But this had its drawbacks, and Cibber indicates them, in his *Apology*: "One only theatre being now in the possession of the whole town," he writes, "the united patentees imposed their terms upon the actors; for the profits of acting were then divided into twenty shares, ten of which went to the proprietors, and the other moiety to the principal actors, in such subdivisions as their different merits might pretend to . . . which occasioned great contention between the patentees and performers."

In 1693 Betterton had an interview with the King with the object of improving matters, and he obtained a licence to act in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and thus two theatres again divided the allegiance of the play-going section of the town. This arrangement continued till the year 1704, when the two companies again became re-united under Christopher Rich's direction. But five years later dissensions again cropped up, and in 1709 Drury Lane Theatre was temporarily closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain. Later in the same year, however, a certain gentleman named Collier, Member of Parliament for Truro, obtained a licence to re-open it, and having got rid of Rich, who went out with what honours of war the possession of most of the scenery and costumes gave him, he re-opened the play-house on November 23rd with a performance of Dryden's *Aurungzebe*, in which Booth sustained the principal part, and Aaron Hill was managing director.

In the meantime the first Haymarket Theatre had been opened by Vanbrugh, and many of the Drury Lane actors and actresses seceded to it. Three of these, however, eventually returned and formed an alliance with Collier, the triumvirate thus created consisting of Collier, Booth, and Doggett. Then Highmore became manager and later Cibber, Wilks, and Booth carried on the place, not without the difficulties invariably besetting the conduct of theatres, especially when under the management of more than one directing head. Some of these troubles were due to internal dissension, but in 1737 a circumstance arose of a still more serious character. It had been customary to allow the servants of those attending performances to occupy free seats in the gallery. This practice was, for certain reasons, stopped, with the result that in February, and again in March, a band of menials entered the house and forcibly obtained possession of their accustomed places. The management naturally took a serious view of these incidents and caused the ringleaders to be apprehended, with the result that they were tried and sentenced to imprisonment.

Again in 1743 a riot occurred, exactly for what



reason is not very clear, in the presence of the King himself, and only by the calling in of the soldiery was it able to be quelled. In the following year Horace Walpole was himself implicated in a disturbance (so unlike the dilettante of Strawberry Hill!) which he describes with gusto in a letter to Mann, dated November 26th, 1744.

Here is how he records the incident: "The town has been trying all this winter to beat pantomime off the stage, very boisterously; for it is the way here to make even an affair of taste and sense a matter of riot and arms. Fleetwood, the master of Drury Lane, has omitted nothing to support them, as they supported his house. About ten days ago he let into the pit great numbers of Bear-garden *bruisers* (that is the term) to knock down everybody that hissed. The pit rallied their forces and drove them out: I was sitting very quietly in the side-boxes, contemplating all this. On a sudden the curtain flew up, and discovered the whole stage filled with blackguards, armed with bludgeons and clubs, to menace the audience. This raised the greatest uproar; and among the rest, who flew into a passion, was your friend the philosopher? In short, one of the actors advancing to the front of the stage to make an apology for the manager, he had scarce begun to say, 'Mr. Fleetwood—' when your friend, with a most audible voice and dignity of anger, called out, 'He is an impudent rascal!' The whole pit huzzaed, and repeated the words. Only think of my being a popular orator! But what was still better, while my shadow of a person was dilating to the consistence of a hero, one of the chief ringleaders of the riot, coming under the box where I sat, and pulling off his hat, said: 'Mr. W., what would you please to have us do next?' It is impossible to describe to you the confusion into which this apostrophe threw me. I sunk down into the box, and have never since ventured to set my foot into the playhouse. The next night the uproar was repeated with greater violence, and nothing was heard but voices calling out, 'Where's Mr. W.? Where's Mr. W.?' In short, the whole town has been

entertained with my prowess, and Mr. Conway has given me the name of Wat Tyler."

But a more important event than such temporary annoyances (a man had tried to shoot George, Prince of Wales, in the theatre, in 1716, by the way) was the first appearance on the Drury Lane stage of David Garrick, who, in 1747,<sup>1</sup> became a partner with Lacey in its management, and here for nearly thirty years was destined to delight and astonish the public by his powers, ranging from his inimitable portrayal of Abel Drugger, to the magnificent impersonation of Hamlet in which, it will be remembered, he had electrified Partridge, into whose mouth Fielding puts his famous compliment to the greatest of English actors.

On Garrick's retirement Sheridan became manager. During Garrick's regime the façade of the theatre had been remodelled from the designs of the Adam Brothers who, besides, did much other reconstructive work to the building. James Ralph, in his *Critical Review of London Buildings*, thus indicates the external and internal appearance of the place, after these improvements had been effected: "The front of Drury Lane Theatre is in a good style, but is encumbered with a large gallery, which is loaded with pots, containing trees and shrubs. We suppose the managers have let the front house to a nursery-man, who exhibits there to allure his customers. The general plan of the interior of this theatre is very convenient, but the ornaments of the galleries and boxes are frippery and unmeaning. Slender columns of glass may strike the vulgar as very fine, but the judicious would wish to see propriety consulted, as well as the rage of gaudy decoration."

This structure which had been the scene of so many histrionic successes and had survived the fury of the Gordon Rioters, was pulled down, and a new house designed by Holland arose on its site. It was built on

<sup>1</sup> There is in existence an interesting and curious MS. Account Book of Drury Lane Theatre for 1746-1748, giving the expenses of productions, salaries paid to the players, the pieces produced, etc. etc. I wrote an account of this in *The Connoisseur* for August and October, 1926. Those interested will find it in the old files of that art periodical.

such a grandiose scale, as things were then judged, that it was thought to be too large for the audience either to see or hear properly. It was opened on March 12th, 1794, Sheridan's father-in-law, Linley, having control over the musical portion of the entertainments. At this time Harriet Mellon, as Lydia Languish, in 1795, and Mrs. Billington, and how many others, added their triumphs to those gained by the performers in the houses which had preceded this one : Nell Gwynn and Mrs. Marshall ; Hart and Mohun ; Betterton and Garrick ; Macklin and Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Siddons and " Perdita " Robinson, and the rest.

Under Sheridan's management the place had a successful career, only interrupted by occasional incidents of an unsatisfactory character, as when, in 1800, Hatfield tried to shoot George III there, or when Lamb's dismal farce, *Mr. H.*, proved the failure it deserved to be ; or when the stupid destructiveness of the O.P. Riots, due to the raising of the old prices charged for seats, played havoc with the interior of the building.

But a far more serious event occurred on the night of February 24th, 1809, for at just after eleven o'clock flames were seen issuing from the building which in an incredibly short time was reduced to ruins, an event which, incidentally, practically ruined Sheridan who had invested nearly all his fortune in it. The famous story of his joking about the right of a man to sit by his own fireside, what time he was watching the conflagration from the neighbouring Piazza Coffee-house, is among the many anecdotes related of that remarkable character. When the first news of the conflagration reached him, he was taking part in a debate in the House of Commons, and on hearing it, he rose with the utmost calmness and remarked, " that whatever might be the extent of the calamity, he hoped it would not interfere with the business of the country," an heroic gesture worthy of the best of the Stoics.

It has, I think, never been satisfactorily explained how this fire originated ; but it is, perhaps, a significant fact that when, not long before, St. James's Palace was partially destroyed by fire, the Prince Regent received



an anonymous letter stating that other public buildings would meet the same fate. The total loss in money value is said to have been £300,000, and the insurance, only covering some £35,000, was immediately attached by the Duke of Bedford, as ground landlord. However, money was found, largely through the instrumentality of Samuel Whitbread,<sup>1</sup> Sheridan's chief creditor, to rebuild the theatre, and no time was lost in erecting a new house, the foundation stone of which was laid on October 29th, 1811. Within a year the opening took place, with a prologue written by Byron (one of the Committee of Management) and spoken by Elliston. Disastrous as this fire was it had one excellent result—the composition, by James and Horace Smith, in the space of some six weeks, of those *Rejected Addresses* which are among the most admirable of all witty and ingenious parodies.<sup>2</sup> The play selected for the opening night was the greatest of all plays, *Hamlet*, and the theatre was packed to capacity by a brilliant and enthusiastic audience.

Since then many and various changes have taken place in the structure of the play-house. For instance, when in 1819 Elliston became lessee, he added the portico on the Catherine Street frontage; and in 1831 the colonnade in Russell Street was built. Even to summarize the notable plays and outstanding players identified with Drury Lane Theatre since those days—just a century of varying successes, triumphs, and a few failures, is here unnecessary, for they are to be found recorded in books specially devoted to this phase of amusement. All sorts of performances have taken place here, Drama and Opera, Burlesque and Pantomime, and once even Van Amberg strode fearlessly among his lions on the stage which had been trodden by Macready and Charles Kean, Joe Grimaldi and Madame Céleste,

<sup>1</sup> Whitbread presented to the theatre the leaden figure of Shakespeare, by Cheere, still to be seen over the main entrance.

<sup>2</sup> The management had advertised for an address to be spoken at the opening, and the Smiths in this remarkable little effusion adumbrated the nature of such, had they been sent in by certain famous authors.

and which had re-echoed the voices of Malibran and Clara Novello and Sims Reeves ; and in front of which Jullien and Berlioz had conducted the orchestra, and Balfe had played as one of the band.

Now that Sadler's Well has undergone a transformation, Drury Lane remains the oldest existing theatre in London.

#### COVENT GARDEN THEATRE

Almost inseparably associated in the mind with Drury Lane Theatre is that of Covent Garden, and, indeed, the two houses had at first a certain actual connection ; for when Christopher Rich, the patentee of Drury Lane, was practically evicted from that theatre, he took a lease of Davenant's old play-house in Portugal Street, and began the erection of a new theatre on its site. He, however, did not live to see it completed ; but his better-known son, John Rich, succeeded him in the venture, and carried on here with such success that, finding the place too circumscribed for his requirements, he determined to erect a more ambitious structure. Discovering a suitable site in Covent Garden, he employed Edward Shepherd, the architect, to design a play-house for him, and with the help of public subscriptions, erected the first Covent Garden Theatre on it. The structure was begun in 1731, but it was not until two years later that Rich was able to take possession of the house. The print supposed to be by Hogarth, entitled "Rich's Glory, or his Triumphant Entry into Covent Garden," perpetuates the incident in pictorial form. On December 7th, 1733, the new theatre was opened with Congreve's, *The Way of the World*. At first success was doubtful, and even Gay's posthumous opera *Achilles* failed to attract. Rich, always alive to the trend of public opinion, at once realised that pantomime was what was really wanted, and such extravaganzas as *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Dragon of Wantley*, which latter created a *furor* for twenty-two nights till the death of Queen Caroline put a stop to it, were found to be just the kind of things the town required. But bad days were ahead. Quin,

Rich's chief stand-by, had returned to Bath, disgusted at the adulation paid to the new man, Garrick, at Drury Lane, and Rich had only an old pantomime, *Merlin's Cave*, with which to charm his patrons. In this dilemma, he persuaded Quin to emerge from his retirement, and engaged, *inter alios*, Peg Woffington and Miss Bellamy to resuscitate the fortunes of his theatre. In view of the subsequent fame she achieved, and the outstanding name she has left, it is curious to find that the success of Peg Woffington's *début* hung for a time in the balance. The account of the circumstance is thus given by Wilkinson, in his *Londina Illustrata*: "Mrs. Cibber's name was announced in the play-bills to perform the part of Queen Constance in *King John*, in 1750; but being suddenly taken ill Mrs. Woffington came forward to the front of the pit ready dressed for the part of Constance, and offered, with the permission of the public, to take Mrs. Cibber's place for that night. The spectators, instead of meeting her address with approbation, seemed entirely lost in surprise. This unexpected reception so embarrassed her, that she was preparing to retire, when Ryan (the stage-manager) who thought they only wanted a hint to rouse them from their insensibility, asked them bluntly whether they would give Mrs. Woffington leave to play Queen Constance. The audience, as if at once awakened from a fit of lethargy, by repeated plaudits strove to make amends for their inattention to the most beautiful woman that ever adorned a theatre."

One or two events of importance are connected with the earlier days of Covent Garden Theatre, one being the inauguration, in 1738, of the famous Beefsteak Society by Rich in conjunction with the scenic artist, Lamert, the meetings of which association were first held in the latter's studio in the theatre. It was just three years later that *The Messiah* was produced here, under Handel's conductorship, and created a sensation—being the first time that really outstandingly great music had been heard in this country.

Rich died in 1761, but Beard, his son-in-law, succeeded to the patent which was still in force, and carried



on with success. Beard, himself a fine tenor singer,<sup>1</sup> was a lover of music, and he may be said to have been the first consistently to make the place a home of sweet sounds as well as of fine acting. Under his management Covent Garden Theatre became as famous for its musical entertainments as it had been under Rich for that *impresario's* favourite pantomimes.

After a successful career of management Beard transferred his interest in the theatre to a company consisting of Messrs. Colman, Harris, Powell, and Rutherford, in 1767. But dissensions arose among the partners, from which Harris and Powell emerged victorious, and continued the conduct of the place till 1781, when Powell died, and Harris (well-omened name, in view of the great Sir Augustus of our own day) continued alone and reconstructed the theatre by drastic alterations, re-opening it in 1782.

The following year proved a notable one in its annals, for then it was that John Kemble made his first appearance on its boards ; and no family was destined to be more closely connected with the fortunes of this play-house than that of the Kembles.

During the following five years various alterations and improvements were made to the structure, particularly in 1785 and 1787. Before then, however, Ralph had published his opinion of the place (in 1783) ; and as I have already set down what he has to say about Drury Lane, I give this companion picture of the other outstanding theatre of the day. "The theatre at Covent Garden is somewhat larger than that of Drury Lane, and has lately been entirely renewed within. The roof has been raised so, that the people in the back seats of the shilling gallery have a good view of the stage. The seats, as well as the pit, as in both galleries, are comfortably raised, and are therefore more convenient. The side boxes extend upon the stage as far as where the stage doors formerly were ; they are considerably elevated, and are far better constructed for the purpose

<sup>1</sup> He married Lady Henrietta Herbert, daughter of Lord Waldegrave ; see Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters*, and Hogarth's *Memoirs of the Opera*.

of seeing than formerly. White Corinthian pillars, with gilt fluting and ornaments, support the boxes and first gallery, and, together with the crimson curtains that decorate the front of each box, have a very happy effect upon the eye ; however, this effect is far more remarkable from the stage than to the audience. The ornaments are few and simple. The colour of the columns is a light pearl ; the flutings are shaded with a tint of green something darker, as are the panels likewise. The front boxes are lighted by four lustres, and have a large girandole at each end. The entrances have been altered, and every thing appears to have been done which the theatre admits of to make it compleat.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1803 John Kemble became proprietor of the theatre and it was during his reign that the disastrous fire occurred here, on September 20th, 1808, which broke out at four o'clock in the morning, and completely gutted the place, besides causing the deaths of between twenty and thirty people. The material loss was very great, no less than £15,000 worth of properties alone being destroyed, among them original scores of the music of Arne and Handel.

Although but a quarter of the loss was covered by insurance, no time was lost in rebuilding the theatre, by the help of public subscriptions, and on the following December 21st the Prince of Wales laid the foundation stone of the new house. The architect selected was Sir Robert Smirke, and how much more imposing and ambitious the new structure was when compared with its predecessor, may be judged from the fact that it cost no less than £150,000. It was at its opening in 1809, that there occurred those famous O.P. Riots to which I have alluded in the account of Drury Lane ; but concerning which the following notice attached to a reference to the matter in one of the *Rejected Addresses*, notably that entitled “ The Rebuilding,” will not be, I think, considered superfluous here :

“ The new Covent Garden opened on the 18. Sept : 1809, when a cry of ‘ Old Prices ’ (afterwards diminished

<sup>1</sup> This is from the amplified edition of Ralph’s book, which was originally published in 1734.

to O.P.) burst out from every part of the house. This continued and increased in violence till the 23rd when rattles, drums, whistles, and cat-calls having completely drowned the voices of the actors, Mr. Kemble, the stage-manager, came forward and said that a committee of gentlemen had undertaken to examine the finances of the concern, and that until they were prepared with their report the theatre would continue closed. 'Name them !' was shouted from all sides. The names were declared, viz., Sir Charles Price, the Solicitor General, the Recorder of London, the Governor of the Bank, and Mr. Angerstein. 'All shareholders !' bawled a wag from the gallery. In a few days the theatre re-opened : the public paid no attention to the report of the referees, and the tumult was renewed for several weeks with even increased violence. The proprietors now sent in hired bruisers to *mill* the refractory into subjection. This irritated most of their former friends, and amongst the rest the annotator (Horace Smith), who accordingly wrote the song 'Heigh-ho says Kendal,' which was caught up by the ballad-singers, and sung under Mr. Kemble's house-windows in Great Russell Street. A dinner was given at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand, to celebrate the victory obtained by W. Clifford in his action against Brandon, the box-keeper, for assaulting him for wearing the letters O.P. in his hat. At this dinner Mr. Kemble attended, and matters were compromised by allowing the advanced price (seven shillings) to the boxes. The writer remembers a former riot at the same theatre (in the year 1792), when the price to the boxes was raised from five shillings to six. That tumult, however, only lasted three nights."

An earlier disturbance still arising out of the same cause, occurred in 1763, concerning which Horace Walpole tells us that the Half-Price Riots affected Covent Garden even more than they did Drury Lane ; but that both play-houses were "demolished on the inside" during the disorders. On that occasion the trouble lasted for no fewer than sixty-seven nights, with the result that the management at last consented to



reduce the price of a pit (or as we should now say stall) seat to 3/6.

In Dr. Doran's *Annals of the Stage*, a more or less complete list is given of the plays acted at Covent Garden from 1801 to 1812. In the latter year Mrs. Siddons took her farewell of the stage here, and four years later Macready made his *début*.

Thence onward the theatre had a variety of successive managers, among them being H. Harris, in 1818; Charles Kemble, in 1823; Osbaldiston, in 1835; Macready, in 1837; and from 1839 Madame Vestris, Kemble, and Lambert followed each other in the conduct of the place. The expenses, however, were found so far to exceed the receipts, that legitimate drama had for a time to give place to more varied fare. Thus Promenade Concerts under the leadership of Jullien took place here during the winter seasons of 1845-46; after which the Anti-Corn Law League obtained a lease of the theatre for the use of its meetings. But in 1847, Mr. Benedict Albano is found reconstructing the place at a vast expense (some £40,000 it is said), and opening it as The Italian Opera House. But he was too optimistic, as later enthusiasts have been when relying on the Englishman's so-called love of music, and in less than a year Albano found himself faced by a deficit of almost the same amount as he had expended on the building. Notwithstanding this, however, and a slightly less, but still very large, loss during the following year, the indomitable impresario battled on, no doubt with the aid of a large financial backing, till March 5th, 1856, when the theatre was again completely destroyed by fire. Pictures in the *Illustrated London News* of the day show us the building in the process of destruction, with firemen working the still archaic apparatus that was then in use and totally unfit for coping with such a mammoth conflagration. In a short time the play-house in which Edmund Kean had last acted some twenty-three years previously, was a heap of blackened and smoking ruins.

But it was, phoenix-like, again to emerge from the débris, this time under the hands of E. M. Barry who

designed the new (and present) house which was opened in May 1858, with Mr. Gye as its manager.

Since then Covent Garden Theatre has held its own, although often, one imagines, not without difficulty, with its recurring Operatic Seasons, its Promenade Concerts, and so forth. Its gala performances, on the occasions of Royal visits and those of wandering foreign potentates, have always been sights to see and have set their brilliant seal on that atmosphere of aristocratic patronage with which the opera is so largely identified. The Promenade Concerts have, too, kept the house in touch with the less decorative, but perhaps, equally music-loving section (one cannot but think a limited section) of the British public.

### THE LYCEUM

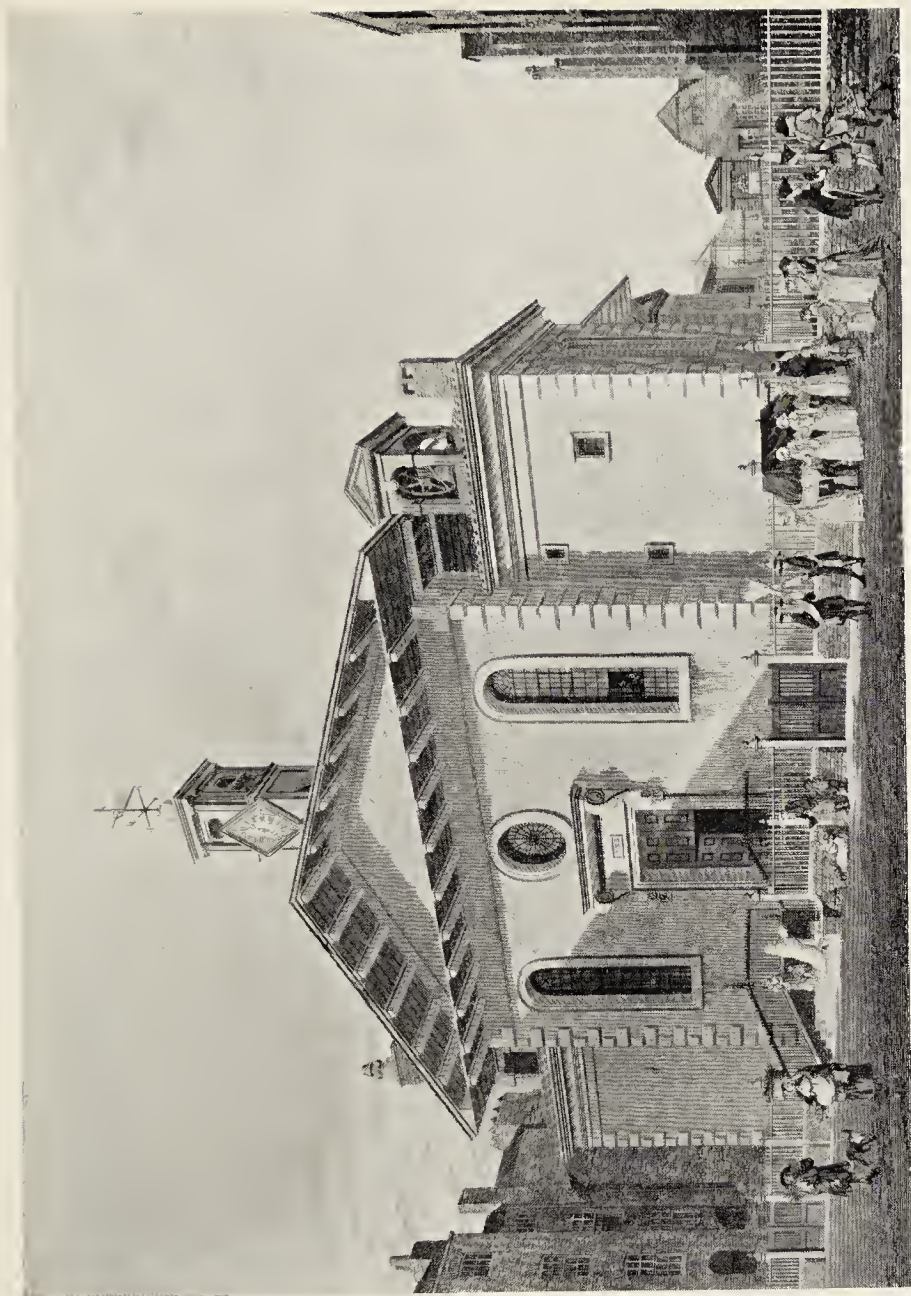
The Lyceum is one of those landmarks which have arisen on sites already not without topographical interest. For, apart from the fact that it stands on part of the ground occupied by Cecil (or Exeter) House, before a theatre was thought of, a building had been erected on it, in 1765, by James Paine, the architect, as the headquarters or *lyceum* of The Incorporated Society of Artists. When, however, the Royal Academy was started, the place ceased to be necessary, and Paine sold the lease to Garrick who purchased it with a view to preventing a rival theatre from being built here, so that it is obvious that such a place of amusement had been contemplated by someone. As Garrick only bought this property for this negative purpose, he permitted the building to be let to other than theatrical people and, in 1790, we find a picture-show being held here, apparently under the *ægis* of the original owners, as it was advertised as being "in the Society's old room called the Lyceum, near Exeter 'Change." Later in that year, however, the building was purchased by a Mr. Lingham, who opened it with musical performances and such like attractions of a varied character, in which from time to time well-known performers, Mrs. Wewitzer, Gray, Master, and Mrs. Reeve, among them, took part.

At that time the best seats cost 2/6, and the inferior ones 1/-. Mendoza, the prize-fighter, also occupied a portion of the building as a boxing-school, and here taught, with the Prince of Wales as a patron, many of the *haut-ton* the science of self-defence.

About this time Lingham leased the main portion, together with some adjoining land, to Dr. Arnold who erected on the latter site a sort of architectural cross between a play-house and a circus, and obtained a licence for theatrical performances. This licence was subsequently withdrawn—probably Drury Lane or Covent Garden had brought influence to bear on the authorities to this end, and the place being no longer possible as a home of the legitimate drama, became a centre for all sorts of varied entertainments: musical concerts, equestrian exhibitions, when one Handy took it and called it The New Circus, in 1795, and again as a fine art centre. Then the ubiquitous Astley acquired it after his transpontine premises had been burned down. In 1803, Winsor here exhibited his invention for gas-lighting, and Philipstal here showed the first “phantasmagoria” ever seen in this country, and made a good deal of money over the venture; what time Lonsdale was running his so-called “Ægyptiana,” without success.

The building had by then been divided into two distinct ones, and the smaller was opened by a clown from Covent Garden, known as Mr. Bologna, with a sort of imitation of Philipstal’s exhibition, which he called “Phantascopia.” It was a period when the public apparently revelled in composite names with a Grecian foundation. Followed, a company of Germans with their “Ergascopia,” in which Winsor of gas fame had a share. And then came Dibdin with a heterogeneous kind of entertainment, and in 1805 a clown named Laurent, greatly daring, took both buildings and threw them into one as the Theatre of Mirth, a low-class show which proved its projector’s financial undoing; and again the place subsided into a home of such losing causes, as the exhibition of Ker Porter’s picture of the Battle of Agincourt; Palmer’s “Portraits of the





*From a water-colour drawing by P. Sanby, dated 1768*

THE WEST FRONT OF ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN



Living and Dead" (in 1806), and in the two following years Incledon's "Voyage to India" and Dibdin's "Professional Volunteers."

Few places have surely been the scene of so varied an assortment of efforts to attract and amuse the public! At last J. Arnold, the son of the Doctor, obtained a licence in 1809, and having enlarged and improved the premises, opened them as the English Opera House. The moment for such a centre was propitious, as Drury Lane Theatre having been burnt down in that year, the members of that company were able to perform in the house which was thereupon rechristened "the Theatre Royal, Lyceum"; while the Beefsteak Society banished, by the fire, from Covent Garden Theatre, in 1808, met here till this new house was also burned down in 1830. So successful was this venture that in 1816, Beazley, the architect, was employed to rebuild it, and it continued a not unprosperous career till 1830, when, on February 16th of that year, it met the seemingly inevitable fate of London play-houses by being burnt to the ground. Plans were at once prepared, again by Beazley, for a new theatre, and this was erected, at a cost of £35,000, on a site rather to the west of the old one; and as Wellington Street was being formed out of Catherine Street about the same time, the opportunity was taken of placing the chief entrance, hitherto in the Strand, where the Lyceum pit entrance is now, with its portico and columns, in that thoroughfare. The new house was opened on July 14, 1834, but still with Opera as its standing dish. Thirteen years later Charles Mathews<sup>1</sup> and Madame Vestris took and redecored the place, to be followed by the Keeleys playing to crowded houses and Fechter portraying so many of the classic rôles of our drama.

But the Lyceum, as it had come to be called, will be for ever famous as the play-house so long identified with the histrionic genius of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry.

<sup>1</sup> The elder Charles Mathews had given his entertainments in the old theatre which he had leased for seven years, 1818-1826, from Arnold.



No theatre in later times has quite approached it in this respect. Season after season it was the Eclipse of the London theatres. The production of those magnificently staged and acted plays, Shakespeare's and the rest, became regular social events, like the Derby and the Royal Academy. For with all his shortcomings Irving had a genius for stage-management, and a personality which rose dominant in everything he did and in every part he sustained ; while the charm and grace and exquisite art of Ellen Terry drew regularly to the Lyceum those who may have been critical of a too mature Romeo and frightened out of their wits by a too realistic Mathias. A First Night here was a scene such as is not to be witnessed to-day in any theatre, when the stalls were filled with celebrities and people fought and struggled around the pit entrance in the Strand to gain mere standing room.

Since those days many and various have been the theatres which have sprung up like mushrooms all over London. Some of these are larger and much finer than the Wellington Street house, but when the history of them all comes to be written, one will stand out beyond the rest, because of a tradition which clings to it and will cling always while it remains intact, of the great actor and actress who made Shakespeare pay in London as he had never paid before.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I must leave to later topographers any account that may be necessary of such modern play-houses within this area as the Fortune opposite Drury Lane Theatre, and the Winter Garden in Drury Lane, and, so quickly do such things spring up, such others as may have arisen before this work is in print.

## CHAPTER XI

### ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN

**T**HE church, dedicated to St. Paul, which stands at the west end of the central square of Covent Garden, forms a not inappropriate focal point for the whole of the district here under consideration. It is not, to be sure, a specially attractive feature from an architectural point of view, although it represents the work of one of our greatest architects. I say "represents" because the existing structure is not that which Inigo Jones actually designed but an exact copy of the earlier church which was destroyed by fire. What, however, makes St. Paul's, Covent Garden, specially notable is the number of illustrious names which are connected with it, through their owners having been buried in the fabric itself or in the surrounding graveyard. A large number of these were playwrights and players, and so St. Paul's has some sort of right to the title that has been given it, of the Actors' Church.

Although as much and with, perhaps, better reason, might be said of Shoreditch Parish Church. And it is really chiefly others than actors who have made St. Paul's memorable as a place of sepulture. But being in the immediate neighbourhood of the two great theatres, and the spots where various members of the profession lived from time to time, it has come to be associated with the performers at these two centres of amusement and those histrionic residents in an essentially theatrical environment.

The actual date of the erection of the original church is a little uncertain. In his book published in 1631 we have Howes remarking that "in Covent Garden there

is a particular parcel of ground<sup>1</sup> laid out, in which they intend to build a church or chapel of ease” ; and this year is generally accepted as that in which the church was begun. It was erected by order of the Earl of Bedford as a place of worship to serve his then newly developed estate, and the well-known story, originally, I believe, related by Speaker Onslow, has it that he told Inigo Jones that he required nothing more than a barn, and that the great architect had thereupon replied that in that case he should have the handsomest barn in England. Sir Reginald Blomfield once wrote concerning the lines of the building that “no architect but Inigo Jones could have made such an audacious design. The elements are very simple. A plain Doric portico, with a triangular pediment and a cupola above it, form the east elevation ; but, as usual with Inigo Jones, his genius is shown in his treatment of these simple elements.” The cost of the structure was about £4500.

Although begun to be erected so long before, the church was not dedicated till September 27th, 1638, when Bishop Juxon performed the ceremony, and this considerable delay was due to trouble with the then Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the Rev. William Bray, on the question of the presentation to the new living ; the right being claimed by Lord Bedford in his dual capacity as ground landlord and builder of the new church ; and Bray resisting this on the ground that as there was then no separate parish, St. Paul's was nothing more than a chapel of ease to St. Martin's. However, the matter being brought before the King in Council, it was laid down that the Church must be regarded merely as a chapel of ease until a separate district was allocated to it by Act of Parliament, and so it remained till 1645, when Covent Garden was separated parochially from St. Martin's.

Malcolm, in his *Londinium Redivivum*, gives a long and documented account of the proceedings in Council over this matter, where those curious in such details will find it. When in 1657 an Act was passed to prevent increase

<sup>1</sup> It was on a piece of adjacent ground that Le Sœur, in 1633, cast his famous equestrian statue of Charles I, now facing Whitehall.



of buildings, and the Earl's sons were heavily fined for over-building in London, a sum of £7000 was remitted to them, by Cromwell's orders, in consideration of their father having built and endowed the church.

After the Restoration the ordinance separating the two parishes which had been abrogated in 1657, was renewed, and the patronage of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, was vested in William, Earl of Bedford, and his heirs. It was also laid down that the Rectors should have perpetual succession, with an income of £100 a year, payable from the rents of three houses in the central square or Piazza. In 1732, the then clerk, John Stacey, estimated the value of the living at £350 per annum.

After half a century's existence the church needed, and received, attention in the matter of repairs ; but later the portico, which appears to have been badly treated, had to be restored, and this was done under the guidance of the architect, the Earl of Burlington, in 1727. The cost of this repair was between three and four hundred pounds, and a writer in a contemporary news-sheet wrote at the time that "it had cost the inhabitants almost twice as much to spoil it." Again in 1788 further renovations were found necessary, this time costing the large sum of £11,000. It might be a cause for wonder how so great an expenditure could be arrived at, but the reason was that whereas plaster had been hitherto used in its construction, Portland stone was now substituted, and the rusticated porches at the sides, hitherto built of brick and plaster, were reconstructed in solid stone. This work was carried out by the architect, Thomas Hardwick. In view of what was destined to happen only a few years later, it was regrettable that so much money had been expended on restoring the fabric, for on September 17th, 1795, a disastrous fire practically gutted the building.

Apart from the damage to the church, only the bare walls and portico of which escaped destruction, the loss included the painted ceiling which had been executed by Edward Pierce, a painter of some merit and a pupil of Vandyck, who died in 1698, leaving a son of the same name who made a reputation as a sculptor. Pierce's

chief form of work was altar pieces and church ceilings, and most of these perished in the Great Fire. There was also in St. Paul's a portrait of Charles I by Sir Peter Lely, which was destroyed with the rest of the contents.

When it was decided to rebuild there must have been a good deal of controversy over the form the new church should take, for the opinions of critics as to Inigo Jones's erection were by no means unanimously favourable. Indeed some, like Horace Walpole, while realising that the architect's hands were more or less tied over the matter, could see nothing in it but the barn which Lord Bedford had wanted. What it looked like in its earlier form can be judged from various extant prints and views of it, of which perhaps the best is that by Hollar, in which the cross<sup>1</sup> originally surmounting the edifice is plainly seen, as well as the two small doors inserted when it was realised that the altar had to be at the east end and thus that the large central entrance could not be used. The new church was quickly erected under the superintendence of Hardwick, on precisely the same lines as the old one, "the work of Jones' immortal hand," as Gay phrases it, so that the consensus of opinion may be taken as being opposed to Walpole who could see no beauty in the structure.

As will be seen by anyone who cares to study Hollar's print (*circa* 1640), various changes have taken place on the east side of the church since that time. Thus the roadway has been considerably widened; the stone-casing removed showing the red brick with only its stone facings, and the bell-turret and cross removed; the two latter improvements having been effected so recently as 1888, or just two and a half centuries after the building had been consecrated. In the meanwhile (1872) the interior was reconstructed and the galleries removed, the architect, Butterfield, being employed to carry out the work. The clock on the eastern portico was made by Richard Harris of London, in 1641, and is said to have been the first pendulum clock constructed in Europe.

<sup>1</sup> There is a reference to this cross in a pamphlet entitled, "Covent Garden Weeded, or the Middlesex Justice of the Peace," by R. Browne, 1659.

I hesitate to set down the names of the notable people recorded in one part or another of the church registers, because the effect would be a sort of epitome of a *Who's Who* for just upon three centuries, as well as because the best-known names have been so frequently given in the many reference books on London. However, I might be regarded as scamping if I refrained from at least referring to some of them. So, taking the Register of Baptisms first, I may note that here was christened, on "May 26th, 1689, Mary, daughter of Evelyn Pierpoint (sic) Esq.," who by her father's accession to the Dukedom of Kingston, became Lady Mary Pierrepont, and is known to everybody as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a future resident in the neighbouring Piazza. Another notable baptismal entry is that of Joseph Mallord William Turner (May 14th, 1775), whose father lived, as we have seen, in Maiden Lane and who was himself laid to rest eventually in a vault in the choir.

But it is among the burial entries that we shall find the most remarkable series of famous names, a series that is, I think, almost unequalled in the registers of any other sacred edifice in London, save of course the Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral. To-day the churchyard has been changed out of all seeming, and the grave-stones have been taken away, so that those who were laid to rest here have now no memorial. But in the space covered by the church and its immediate precincts, there lies the accumulated dust of a large number of those who have in various ways adorned the annals of the country as well as of not a few who have done nothing of the kind.

Among the latter, and he happens to have been one of the first to be buried here, was Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, the favourite of James I, before Buckingham supplanted him in the King's good graces, and the participator in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, who died in 1645. He was the only man interred here who had once been condemned to death, the sentence being set aside through the King's intervention. The whole of the unsavoury story is told in a rare work called *Truth brought to Light by Time*, and, indeed, enters into the annals of the country. A very different seven-



teenth-century figure who lies here was Sir Henry Herbert, "Master of the Revels" to Charles I, and brother of the better-remembered Lord Herbert of Cherbury and George Herbert, and who, as we have seen, lived and died in James Street. Here, too, was buried Samuel Butler. Aubrey tells us with the particularity of one who was present at the ceremony, exactly the spot where the poet lies, "according to his owne appointment in the churchyard of Covent Garden ; i.e. in the north part next the church at the east end. His feet touch the wall. His grave two yards distant from the pilaster of the door (by his desire), six feet deep."<sup>1</sup> Butler's death occurred, in Rose Street, on September 25th, 1680, and on the following November 30th, Sir Peter Lely expired at his house in the Piazza, and was also buried in St. Paul's. When the fire occurred in 1795, the monument to the painter, adorned with his bust by Grinling Gibbon, and an epitaph written by the poet and miniature painter Flatman, was destroyed. And this reminds me that a contemporary sculptor, Thomas Burman, the master of the better-known Bushnell, was also laid to rest here, his epitaph, stating that he died on March 17th, 1673-4, aged fifty-six, being also destroyed in the fire.

Still another seventeenth-century worthy buried here was Sir Dudley North, who was one of the earlier members of the aristocracy (he was a son of Lord North) to engage in trade, and who has left a name as a political economist, his *Discourses upon Trade*, published in 1691 and reprinted in 1836, anticipating many features of later political economy. He died soon after the appearance of his book, to be exact, on December 31st, 1691, in the house in the Piazza formerly occupied by Sir Peter Lely, and was buried near the altar of St. Paul's. In 1716, however, his body was exhumed and taken to Glemham in Suffolk.

A year before this William Wycherley's body was removed from his house in Bow Street and interred in St. Paul's. Indeed the earlier years of the eighteenth century witnessed the burial here of a number of illustrious

<sup>1</sup> Aubrey's *Lives of Eminent Men*, in *Athenæ Oxonienses*.

people, many of them actors, such as Dick Estcourt in 1712 ; Edward Kynaston, the famous impersonator of female parts before women took to play-acting, in the same year ; Robert Wilks, whose " style " was praised by Steele, in 1732 ; and, to come to much later times, Charles Macklin, who was buried under the communion table, in 1797.

Artists, too, have contributed their quota to the famous dead in the church. Lely I have already noticed, but in addition Pierce Tempest, remembered for his " Cries of London," was buried here in 1717 ; Grinling Gibbon, of whom it is superfluous to say anything, in 1721 ; and James Worsdale, the painter who composed his own epitaph which seems aptly to sum up his characteristics :

" Eager to get, but not to keep the pelf,  
A friend to all mankind except himself."<sup>1</sup>

Worsdale, who was buried here in 1767, was a writer as well as a painter, and as he once acted in a farce he had himself written, called *The Assembly*, must have been an all-round person ; perhaps too versatile to be outstanding in any one direction. A far greater man, as an exponent of the fine arts, whose body rests somewhere here, was Thomas Girtin, the father of English water-colour painting, as he has been styled, who died at the early age of twenty-seven, in the Strand, on November 9th, 1802—the same age, curiously enough, as that attained by that other remarkable artistic genius, Bonington.

Among other bodies that lie in St. Paul's or its churchyard, are those of Mrs. Centlivre, who died in 1723 ; Dr. Arne, that exquisite composer, in 1778 ; Dr. John Armstrong, who wrote a poem called *The Art of Preserving Health*, and was the friend of Fuseli and Reynolds (who, by the way, painted his portrait), and whom we have met at his house in Russell Street, where he died in 1779 ; Tom Davies, the bookseller and friend of Johnson, in 1785 ; Sir Robert Strange, the famous engraver, brought here from his residence in Henrietta Street, in 1792 ; and John Wolcot, the *Peter Pindar* of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Walpole in his *Anecdotes of Painting*.

innumerable satires, whose coffin, at his own request, was buried so as practically to touch that of Samuel Butler, one of the few men he admired.

The registers of St. Paul's reveal many other interesting facts. Such, for instance, as that Fielding's "Inimitable Betty Careless" who figures in Boitard's "Covent Garden Morning Frolic" died in the poor-house, and was buried from there, in a pauper's grave, in the churchyard. Also we find from it that Simon Patrick, Bishop of Ely, was once rector here, his name, written by himself, appearing in the church records.

It is interesting to learn from Allen, in his *History of London*, that the church had originally been insured for £10,000 in the Westminster Fire Office, but that the policy had expired just a year before the fire in 1795, and had not been renewed, with the result that the cost of its rebuilding fell upon the parish and raised the rates at least twenty-five per cent !



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